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The disease and remedy of  
sin









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# THE DISEASE AND REMEDY OF SIN

BY THE

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TO THE DEAR MEMORY  
OF  
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YOUNG STREET FREE CHURCH, GLASGOW  
FOR FORTY YEARS  
A FAITHFUL PHYSICIAN OF SOULS





## P R E F A C E

ONE of our most pressing needs to-day is that of making religion more vital in the common experience of men. It is too often regarded either as a mere luxury, expensive and unnecessary; or as a burden, painful to carry, difficult to endure. Its doctrines seem remote from the lives of men, and its rites empty and often wearisome. God is only "the residue" of life, and it is a residue men are more and more being tempted to grudge.

It is the aim of these pages to show that true religion, so far from being apart from real life, is the very essence of it; that its truths are the laws of Spiritual Health, and that, far from being a dispensable luxury, they are more necessary than the bread we eat or the air we breathe.

With this end, the various experiences of the soul in health and disease have been examined from a medical point of view. The volume therefore may be described as an Essay in the Psychology of Sin and Salvation from a medicinal standpoint. Christianity is everywhere regarded as the care and cure of spiritual disease. The prevalent category of thought is "spiritual health": the commanding goal is "eternal life."

How far the author has succeeded in carrying out his method it is for others to judge. He is conscious of many imperfections, due partly to the fact that his work has been that of a pioneer, and that it has been performed

in the intervals of a busy ministerial life. But he ventures to believe that the standpoint, though by no means the only one for viewing the Christian facts, is a fruitful one, and that by adopting it fresh light may be cast on many an old doctrine and many a dark mystery.

In issuing this volume the author would express his deep sense of gratitude to the Rev. Professor James Moffatt, D.D., for his kindness in going over the proofs and giving him some useful suggestions. He has also to thank the Rev. David Forfar, M.A., and J. Thomson West, M.D., for similar help; and for the Index at the close he has been indebted to the aid of the Rev. J. H. Carslaw, D.D.

The Scripture references are in the Revised Version unless otherwise noted.

W. MACKINTOSH MACKAY.

GLASGOW, 11th Nov. 1918.

# CONTENTS

## PART I

### CHAPTER I

	PAGE
RELIGION AND MEDICINE . . . . .	I

### CHAPTER II

THE SYMPTOMS OF SIN . . . . .	18
-------------------------------	----

### CHAPTER III

THE SOURCES OF SOUL-SICKNESS . . . . .	35
--	----

### CHAPTER IV

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF SIN . . . . .	49
--------------------------------------	----

### CHAPTER V

✓ DISEASES OF THE FLESH . . . . .	57
-----------------------------------	----

### CHAPTER VI

✓ DISEASES OF THE HEART . . . . .	70
-----------------------------------	----

### CHAPTER VII

✓ DISEASES OF THE SPIRIT . . . . .	85
------------------------------------	----

### CHAPTER VIII

THE ISSUE OF SIN . . . . .	101
----------------------------	-----

PART II

*THE REMEDY OF SIN*

CHAPTER I

	PAGE
SALVATION AS LIFE . . . . .	115

CHAPTER II

THE FAITH OF LITTLE CHILDREN—PREVENTIVE SPIRITUAL MEDICINE . . . . .	129
---	-----

CHAPTER III

CONVERSION BY CRISIS . . . . .	142
--------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER IV

CONVERSION BY LYSIS . . . . .	159
-------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER V

REMEDIA CRUCIS . . . . .	175
--------------------------	-----

CHAPTER VI

SPIRITUAL CONVALESCENCE . . . . .	191
-----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER VII

PRAYER AS A MEDICINE OF THE SOUL . . . . .	207
--	-----

CHAPTER VIII

THE HEALING OF THE SANCTUARY . . . . .	222
--	-----

# CONTENTS

xi

## CHAPTER IX

	PAGE
HOLY COMMUNION AS A MEDICINE OF THE SOUL . . . . .	233

## CHAPTER X

SPIRITUAL SURGERY . . . . .	244
-----------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XI

THE DIVINE SURGERY OF PAIN . . . . .	256
--------------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XII

ETERNAL LIFE . . . . .	270
------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XIII

WITHIN THE VEIL . . . . .	283
---------------------------	-----

## NOTE A

LIST OF SCRIPTURE PASSAGES . . . . .	295
--------------------------------------	-----

## NOTE B

RECENT RESEARCHES IN THE SUBCONSCIOUS, AND THEIR RELIGIOUS INTEREST . . . . .	299
--	-----

## NOTE C

MENTAL HEALING . . . . .	304
--------------------------	-----

INDEX . . . . .	307
-----------------	-----

## PART I

“SIN is not a monster, to be mused on, but an impotence to be got rid of. All thinking about it, beyond what is indispensable for the firm effort to get rid of it, is waste of energy and waste of time. We then enter that element of morbid and subjective brooding, in which so many have perished. This sense of sin, however, it is also possible to have not strongly enough to beget the firm effort to get rid of it.”

MATTHEW ARNOLD.



## CHAPTER I

### RELIGION AND MEDICINE

EXPERIENCE sometimes gives hospitality to ideas which might otherwise be unwelcome. Perhaps, therefore, we may best introduce the thoughts herein set down by an author's apology, *e vita sua*. It is now more than a few years since they first came to my youthful mind with all the freshness of a new suggestion. I was then, for reasons I need not detail, studying Theology and Medicine simultaneously. From inquiries relating to the soul, I went on to studies connected with the body. The contrast between the two was striking and, to one whose sympathies were all with Theology, in some degree painful. The vitality and interest of the study of Medicine, as well as its practical efficiency in the hospital ward, compelled my admiration. Here was a science that had its feet firmly planted on reality. Here was a study that knew what it wanted and how to get there. As one listened to the theory of disease in the classroom and then saw it practically confirmed in the clinical ward, it came to me with the surprise and vividness of a discovery that the study of religion might gain both in vitality and efficiency if it were pursued from this point of view, namely, as a remedy to be applied to the conscience rather than as a system of truth to be accepted by the reason.

Of all the studies of the mind, none should be more interesting than that of religion. Its truths are as close to reality as the truths of medical science, and infinitely more important. What fact more real than sin? What

experience more impressive than salvation? Yet while in its critical and historic aspects the study of Christianity was full of interest, when it came to the systematizing and applying of its results, it failed to command the attention of the sister science. Of course, one could not fail to see the vast advantage, that science possessed which dealt with the things one could touch and taste and handle. Still, it did seem to me that if Christianity were looked at from a similar point of view, there would be a real gain in vitality and interest, both in its study and in the practical efficiency of its results. As to the former, we see in the systems of such men as Calvin and Schleiermacher the freshening power of a new and fruitful category. Was it expecting too much to suppose that something at least might not result from the application of the category of Remedy to the sum of the Christian content? As to the latter, its utility was still more obvious, since it brought its students at once in touch with the object of their life, and turned an abstract science into a beloved art.

For some years the idea lay dormant. It was not, however, unfruitful, being at once of apologetic and practical value in the work of the ministry. Not, however, till the appearance of Professor James's book on the *Varieties of Religious Experience* did I see how best it could be applied to religion. I there saw that its chief value lay in the field of Psychology, and through it in the Philosophy of Religion. Philosophies of religion had hitherto been disappointing reading. In spite of the brilliancy of their authors, there was a lack of warmth about them. You were introduced to what was little better than a beautiful corpse. Religion was eviscerated of experience, and "a religion without experience is no religion."<sup>1</sup>

How different in the glowing pages of Professor James! You were in contact with reality all the time. And what a breathing, palpitating reality it was! But what to me

<sup>1</sup> Max Müller, "Gifford Lectures" on *National Religion*,

was most interesting was the fact that the regulative category was largely, if not wholly, the same as that which had proved so helpful to myself in the practical work of the ministry. Two of the chapters are devoted to the "sin-sick soul" and one to the "religion of healthy-mindedness." One thing seemed to me defective, if I might venture to criticize such a work—the experiences dealt with struck me as too abnormal; and this, though it increased the interest of the book, detracted from the trustworthiness of its conclusions as a guide to the ordinary religious experience.

Thinking thus, I was led to "search the Scriptures," to see what the great record of experience there has to say on this question. In studying this I was astonished to find how large a place medical categories fill in its descriptions of the malady of sin.

Beginning, for example, with the Psalter, that burning heart of Scripture experience, I found that five of the so-called penitential Psalms were largely impregnated with it. The 6th, 32nd, 38th, 51st and 102nd make a specific reference to disease, and others outside the list might also be mentioned, the 34th, 40th and 77th. It may be interesting to quote "the penitential Psalms," as there is a curious unanimity in their description of sin. Thus in the 6th, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am withered away: O Lord, heal me; for my *bones* are vexed."<sup>1</sup> In the 32nd, "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. When I kept silence, my *bones* waxed old through my roaring all the day long."<sup>2</sup> In the 38th, "O Lord, rebuke me not in Thy wrath: neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure. . . . There is no soundness in my flesh because of Thine indignation; neither is there any health in my *bones* because of my sin."<sup>3</sup> In the 51st, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow . . . that the *bones* which Thou hast broken may rejoice."<sup>4</sup> In the 102nd, "My days

<sup>1</sup> Ps. vi. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xxxii. 2, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. xxxviii. 1-3.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. li. 7, 8.



consume away like smoke, and my *bones* are burned like a firebrand . . . because of Thine indignation and Thy wrath.”<sup>1</sup> It will be noticed that in all these verses the bones are mentioned as one of the chief points of pain. There are some, indeed, who hold that only a physical malady is here referred to. So Gunkel and others.<sup>2</sup> But while this may be true of some of the Psalms, it would be a most prosaic literalism which would apply it to all. Calvin surely takes a true view when he says it points to “the deep-seated character of the disease.”<sup>3</sup> So we sometimes say, “You will feel it in your very bones.” Possibly, however (so at least the 51st Psalm would suggest), the picture is that of leprosy as a type of sin—a disease we know which penetrates the whole physical structure, even to the breaking of the bones.

In Ps. 103rd, which is the penitent’s thanksgiving, we have a recurrence of medical phraseology, “Bless the Lord, O my soul. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities ; who healeth all thy diseases ; who redeemeth thy life from destruction.” And how? “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.”<sup>4</sup>

When we turn to prophetic literature we see still more undoubted examples of pathological phraseology. Thus we all recall the great summons to repentance with which Isaiah opens his prophecy, “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it ; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores : they have not been closed, neither bound up, or mollified with ointment.”<sup>5</sup> To Jeremiah again it is the intractable nature of the malady that is characteristically present, “They have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people lightly, saying, Peace, peace ; when there is no peace. Is there no balm in

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cii. 3. Gunkel (*Ausgewählte Psalmen*, p. 131) takes a different view.

<sup>2</sup> Gunkel, *Ausgewählte Psalmen*, p. 131.

<sup>3</sup> “Nec carnem nominat quæ tenetur est sed ossium nomine intelligit precipuum robur suum fuisse tremefactum,” Calvin, *in loc.*

<sup>4</sup> Ps. ciii. v. 1, 3, 12.

<sup>5</sup> Isa. i. 5, 6.

Gilead? is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of My people recovered?"<sup>1</sup> With Hosea again there is a more optimistic note, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up."<sup>2</sup>

If, finally, we turn to the Pentateuch we shall find a not discordant voice. Thus the entrance of sin into our nature is referred to as a mortal malady—"In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."<sup>3</sup> The judgment of sin here denounced is not physical but spiritual. Adam did not die physically on the day he fell, but a spiritual malady then entered nature, whose end unless cured was to be eternal death. This is the view of Clemen.<sup>4</sup> In the Levitical doctrine of sacrifice the thought of sin as disease is not so prominent; but it is not absent. In the fact that the penitent communicated his sin to the victim by laying his hands upon its head, and that when killed the entrails were burnt to ashes and cast outside the camp, may be traced the idea that forgiveness is more than the remission of penalty. There is also the transmission of a morbid element from the penitent to the victim. The same thought is still more evident in the scapegoat driven into the wilderness where it can infect no one.<sup>5</sup> God, on the other hand, is the sovereign remedy for all the diseases of His people. His presence in the camp, whether in the visible form of brazen serpent or in the spiritual apprehension of faith, is always the "saving health" of His own; and it is not in a physical only, but in a spiritual sense as well, that Moses describes Him as, "Jehovah Rophi," the God of Health.<sup>6</sup>

We may close this survey of the O.T. with the significant picture of the "suffering servant" in the Second Isaiah.<sup>7</sup> The most significant touch in this picture next to its element of vicarious suffering is that this suffering is remedial in its effect. "Surely"—I give Cheyne's trans-

<sup>1</sup> Jer. viii. 11, 22.

<sup>2</sup> Hos. vi. 1, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. ii. 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Christliche Lehre von der Sünde*, p. 242.

<sup>5</sup> Lev. xvi.

<sup>6</sup> Ex. xv. 26.

<sup>7</sup> Isa. liii. 5.

lation—"our sicknesses He bore; and as for our pains, He carried them . . . the punishment of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we have been healed." In this, the crown of O.T. teaching, we have the picture of the Messiah as the vicarious healer of humanity.

Turning now to the N.T. we come into another atmosphere in which the remedial view of salvation is still more emphasized. In the O.T. the most we can say of it is that it is a vivid and frequent figure. In the New, however, it is more than a figure: it is an attitude. In this connection we may quote the words of Harnack, who in his *Expansion of Christianity* gives this conception a foremost place among the forces which led Christianity to its rapid conquest of the Greek and Roman world. "Jesus," he says, "appeared among His people as a physician. 'The healthy need not a physician, but the sick.' The first three Gospels depict Him as the physician of soul and body alike, as the Saviour or healer of men. Jesus says very little about sickness. He cures it. He does not explain that sickness is health: He calls it by its proper name, and has compassion on the sick person. There is nothing sentimental or artificial about Jesus. He draws no fine distinctions; and utters no sophistries about healthy people being sick, and sick people being really healthy. He sees Himself surrounded by crowds of sick people. He attracts them, and His one impulse is to help them. Jesus does not distinguish rigidly between sicknesses of the body and the soul. He takes them both as expressions of one supreme ailment in humanity. But He knows their sources. He knows it is easier to say, 'Rise up and walk,' than to say, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' And He acts accordingly. No sickness of the soul repels Him. He is constantly surrounded by sinful men and tax-gatherers. No bodily disease is too loathsome for Jesus. In this world of wailing, filth and profligacy, which pressed upon Him every day, He kept Himself vital, pure, and busy at all times.



“In this way He won men and women to be His disciples. The circle by which He was surrounded was a circle of people who had been healed. They were healed because they believed on Him. To know God was the health of the soul. They knew they were healed just because they had recognized God as the Father in His Son. Henceforth they drew health and real life from a perennial spring.”<sup>1</sup>

I have quoted Harnack at some length, because his name is an authority. But, of course, his contention might be supported with texts which would fill pages; for, as he remarks, the N.T. is “saturated with them.” We may, however, point out that Christ’s distinctive name Saviour meant primarily “Healer” to the Greeks. Soter has two meanings, Deliverer and Healer. We have usually understood it as deliverer or redeemer from penalty. But the word also means healer, and there is good reason to believe that this was its connotation in the early Christian Church. At the Christian era one of the most popular of cults was the worship of Æsculapius, the god of healing. He was worshipped as Θεὸς-Σωτήρ, God the saviour.<sup>2</sup> Hence when Christ was preached as Saviour, He was preached as the new and better healer, who could save from the sicknesses of the soul as well as from those of the body.

It is also significant that when Christ unfolded His programme of the kingdom, He placed this thought prominently forward, quoting the words of the evangelical prophet, “He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted.”<sup>3</sup> On this plea He based His apology for loving sinners, reminding the self-righteous with a fine touch of irony that a good physician was expected to spend his time among the sick and not among the healthy folk.<sup>4</sup>

In the Johannine and Pauline Gospel we have another way of looking at sin, which though seemingly different is really in harmony with that of the Synoptists. This is

<sup>1</sup> *Die Ausbreitung des Christentums*, bk. ii. ch. ii. Prof. Moffatt’s Translation, i. 121 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Origen, iii. 3, quoted by Harnack.

<sup>3</sup> Luke iv. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Mark ii. 17.

the conception of salvation as eternal life coming to the soul through faith in Jesus Christ. The classic text is, of course, John iii. 16, where from the faith-cure to the dying Israelites in the wilderness Jesus is represented as the eternal healer of humanity's deadly wound. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."<sup>1</sup> This eternal life is not something beyond the grave. It is the present and progressive possession of faith. "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly."<sup>2</sup> "And this is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."<sup>3</sup>

The same conception regulates the Pauline contrast of life and death. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life."<sup>4</sup> No doubt to Paul salvation appears rather as a resurrection from the dead than as a recovery from disease. In this, however, he is only speaking prophetically. The basal idea of his thought about sin is that it is a malady so mortal that its victims are already as good as dead. Sometimes he puts it thus, laying aside figurative language; as when he says, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."<sup>5</sup> Philosophically, indeed, disease is just *death working in life*. Death and life are present side by side in every diseased organism. And the same is true of the soul. So long as it is in the power of sin it is under the power of death. That power, at present limited and relative, will, unless unchecked, by and by become absolute: "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."<sup>6</sup>

This conception of Christianity as a resurrection from death is, says Harnack, one of the notes of sub-apostolic preaching, and is one of the sources of its success. "The soul of man, they said, is sick from the moment of birth. The whole race lies a-dying. But now the 'goodness and

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> John x. 10.

<sup>3</sup> John xvii. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. vi. 23.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. viii. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Jas. i. 15.

human kindness of God the Saviour' have appeared with renewal for the sin-sick soul. Baptism was thenceforth conceived as a 'bath for restoring the soul's health'<sup>1</sup> or for the recovery of life. The Lord's Supper was valued as 'the potion of immortality,'<sup>2</sup> and penitence was termed *vera de satisfactione medicina*,<sup>3</sup> the true medicine derived from the atonement. At the celebration of the sacrament thanks were offered for the life therein bestowed (Did. ix.)."<sup>4</sup>

In such phrases we may perhaps trace the beginning of that materializing of the sacraments which was afterwards to end in the *opus operatum*. But at the beginning it was not so. The life of God was communicated to the sin-sick soul by simple faith. The sacraments were only media of faith. And faith made well simply because it united the soul to Christ. To be without Christ was to be sick unto death, and to have Him was health and life. He was the one Mediator between God and man, the one avenue through which "the life that was life indeed"<sup>5</sup> could pass into the soul of man.

Such, then, is the N.T. conception of salvation from the point of view of remedy. As has been already said it is not a mere figure of speech: it is a new attitude. When Christ revealed God as the Father in heaven, was that a mere metaphor? Was it not essentially a new attitude to God? So if we look at the gospel under this conception we see it from a new view-point altogether. Things that we before neglected become of prime importance, while things that we thought important may no longer seem so. We gain both theoretically and practically: theoretically, because the doctrines of our faith are closely correlated with experience all the time, and thus become vital and real at every point; and practically,

<sup>1</sup> Tertullian, *De Bap.* i.

<sup>2</sup> Ignatius, Justin and Irenæus.

<sup>3</sup> Cyprian, *De Lapsis*, xv.

<sup>4</sup> Harnack's *Ausbreitung*, bk. ii. ch. i., to which I owe the previous references.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 19, R.V.



because we have now a new sympathy for the sinner and a more intelligent apprehension of his malady.

1. Let us take the last point first. The conception of salvation as a remedy would give us *a new sympathy* for sinners because a more intelligent insight into their condition.

Every student of medicine knows the change in attitude to disease before and after his study of medicine. Man's natural attitude to sickness is one of fear and repulsion. The risk of infection, the loathsomeness of its pathological manifestations, and the distress attended by its progress, make sickness a thing the healthy man likes to put out of his sight as quickly as possible. But no sooner does an enthusiasm for medicine take hold of the mind than all this is changed. The ardent student now seeks disease with a passionate if antagonistic interest. "The physician knows not the healthy, but the sick." So is it with the soul-healer. Sin, in its later stages at least, is more loathsome in its manifestations than any physical malady. The feeling it arouses was once expressed by a great evangelist when, after a night devoted to dealing with sin-sick souls, he said, "I felt inclined to throw up the window."

No doubt this repugnance is to be chiefly conquered by the evangelist's love for the souls of men. But one of the most powerful aids towards that interest is the consideration that these repulsive manifestations of sin which repel us so much at times, are at their root the outgoings of a cruel disease in whose deadly grip the sinner is. As Carlyle once said of a man who had deceived him: "Poor devil, if we knew how he has come to be what he is, we should not be so hard upon him"; so when we look at the drunkard or the fornicator or the murderer as the victim of spiritual disease, a new and sympathetic interest absorbs us.

We now regard him not as one to loathe, but as a doctor regards his patient, one to help and heal.

A serious objection may, however, here be raised.

Some one may say: "The analogy is not perfect: disease is a passive thing; it is not in a man's own power. On the other hand, sin is a voluntary act. To call a sinner a patient is to use misleading language." This difficulty was, of course, before me at an early stage of my inquiry. As a friend<sup>1</sup> once said, "It seems to me that your category is open to the same objection as Professor Drummond's *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*. It is using the categories of matter to explain the laws of spirit; and you cannot do this, because the two spheres are totally different. The place where your analogy will break down is in regard to freedom. There is no freedom in disease, and therefore no responsibility. There is freedom in regard to sin, and therefore accountability."

The objection seems formidable, but it is not really so formidable as it looks, and it is indeed in relation to the question of moral freedom and responsibility that the remedial attitude yields some of its most valuable fruits. As to Dr. Mackintosh's objection, that the medical re-statement of the Christian content is only another attempt to bring natural law into the spiritual world, let me say at the outset that no such intention is in my mind. There is an analogy of *attitude* suggested, but no identification of law. At the same time we may profitably rise from the one to the other. Nature is a real mediator of God. "The invisible things of God are clearly seen by the things that are made."<sup>2</sup> As the poet has it—

"In the moving web of time I ply  
And weave the garment men know me by."

At the same time experience teaches us that every sphere in nature has its own characteristics, and to attempt therefore to lay down the laws of the spiritual world as the same as those of the natural seems to me as unscientific

<sup>1</sup> Professor Hugh Mackintosh, New College, Edinburgh.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. i. 20.

as it is untrue. There is no identification of law: the only assimilation is one of attitude.

But as regards the special objection, that a sinner is free and therefore responsible, while a sick man is passive and therefore irresponsible, can such a distinction be pressed on the reflective mind? Is any sinner truly free? Not if we accept the Pauline teaching about sin. Not if we observe the facts of human experience. The Bible teaches us that the sinner is what he is in the beginning by inheritance. "In Adam all die." And experience confirms the doctrine showing that the victims of lust, as we significantly call them, are what they are largely by heredity and environment. They are products of the system in which they were born, the outcome of forces largely though not entirely beyond their control, patients of an infected social atmosphere.

"Freedom," says Herbert Spencer, "is an inveterate illusion." In the absolute sense of the word this is true, though not in the relative. Do we hold that sinners are not responsible; that the "bottom dog" must not be blamed for his savage conduct? This is the teaching of the left wing of Socialism, and while its popularity with a certain class shows the amount of truth there is in it, we need not say we do not accept it. The sinner is limited in his freedom, but he has enough left to make him responsible both to law and to God. He has, in fact, the *same freedom a sick man has*.

What is the freedom of a sick man? He has the freedom of obedience, and he has the freedom of treatment. He has the power to control his symptoms. By attending to his physician's instructions, or by regulating his habits, by cultivating a cheerful spirit, in other words, by the will to live, he may do much to modify the course of his disease. He may make it less a burden to others, and even less deadly to himself. He cannot, indeed, cure it. In spite of all his efforts he may grow worse and die. He has, however, another option—he can change his treatment. He can call in a new physician who, by surgical



interference or by a radical change of treatment, may so alter the whole course of the disease as to effect a cure.

Now exactly so is it with the soul. So long as it is under the power of evil, its freedom is strictly limited, but within limits it is real. It has first *the power of Inhibition*. A man may not be able to control his thoughts, but he can generally control their passage into action. It is on this, Jurisprudence is based. The law says I cannot take account of your thoughts, but I can and will take account of your actions. This is just the sick man's freedom, the freedom of inhibition. It is a real and often a very nobly exercised freedom, but it is strictly limited in its range, and as spiritual disease goes on that range tends to get more and more narrow.

Besides Inhibition, man has, however, another freedom, the freedom of choice of treatment; the transference of his case from the realm of law to the realm of grace, the yielding of himself to the Divine Physician, the choice, in other words, of a new and higher standing ground. This is the only perfect freedom the sinner possesses. As R. J. Campbell put it: "Free-will, in the sense of unlimited freedom of choice, does not exist. The only freedom we possess is that of a bird in a cage. We can choose between the lower and the higher standing ground."<sup>1</sup>

Is not this substantially Paul's view in his analysis of the sinful consciousness in Rom. vii.? He feels like a man in the grasp of moral paralysis. "The good that I would I do not: the evil that I would not, that I do. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death." He was an absolute slave so long as he chose the lower standing ground. Yet he was responsible because he could always choose the remedy. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."<sup>2</sup>

Besides giving a new and more sympathetic interest in the sin-sick soul, our attitude would also have an important *influence on its treatment*. Speaking generally, it would

<sup>1</sup> *The New Theology*.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. vii. 19, 24, 25.

tend to individualize it much more than is now the custom. It would, for example, place a great emphasis on "spiritual diagnosis" as the essential preliminary to successful treatment. It is rather interesting that this was a favourite idea of one of the most skilled physicians of souls in our time. In the biography of Henry Drummond, it is told that when a student he delivered a paper to his college Theological Society on this subject of "spiritual diagnosis." Dr. Stalker, who heard it, says that its main idea was that in dealing with souls we should approach them as a doctor does his patient, with no cast-iron theory of salvation or premeditated prescription, but simply through the avenue of their individual need. "To draw out souls one by one," I quote Drummond's words, "to buttonhole them and take from them the secret of their lives, to read them off like a page of print, to pervade them with your spiritual essence and make them transparent, this is the spiritual diagnosis which is so hard to acquire and so difficult to practise."<sup>1</sup>

Such a "study of spiritual discernment" is indeed neither easy to acquire nor pleasant to practise. Yet it is for want of it that the phrase we sometimes hear in certain circles, "an interesting case," has become so often the synonym for all that is commonplace in experience and cast-iron in treatment. How different the method of the great Physician, as evidenced by such stories as that of Zacchæus, the Woman at the Well, or Nicodemus. Many a minister's humiliating failures might have been largely avoided had he gone through a course of, or at least known the need for, the study of spiritual discernment.

No doubt there has been a great improvement since Drummond's day in the training of ministers in this respect. Settlements for students have been everywhere established, and a Warden is supposed to guide men into wise and sane methods of saving souls. This is good; but unless such a clinical class is informed by a theory of sin, from some such standpoint as is here laid down, I do not think the

<sup>1</sup> *Biography*, by Dr. George Adam Smith, p. 50.

best results can be obtained. To profit by *clinical* spiritual medicine, you need first a theory of spiritual medicine.

Nor must we get into the way of thinking that it is a method to be only or chiefly practised among the poor, or with men who are open reprobates seeking deliverance in revival meetings. Every church is a hospital, and ought to be a Bethesda. Every now and then we hear of poor wandered souls coming to self-destruction or some other spiritual catastrophe for want of personal dealing. An institution such as the Salvation Army possesses in its "anti-suicide bureau," or, better still, an opportunity such as the Roman Church offers in its Confessional (only made voluntary), might be the means of bringing the pastor into that personal touch with his people which is so lacking in better class Protestant churches.

Then, further, the remedial attitude to sin would tend not only to individualize the patient, but it would also favour the *socializing of the treatment*. It would recognize that in many cases the treatment must be social as well as individual. The patient must be brought into a new atmosphere before any permanent recovery can be expected. In this we again see the wisdom of General Booth in adding a social wing to his evangelical work. Religious sanitation is as needful as religious evangelization.

2. Let us now turn in closing to look briefly at the effect of such a conception in the intellectual *reconstruction of the Christian content*. So far as I can see I do not think there would be any material change here. Its chief value would lie in the field of the Psychology of Religion, though, of course, that would entail a certain result on the theological restatement that would ensue.

Broadly speaking, its method would be essentially anthropocentric. In this it would approximate to Schleiermacher, only that it would seek to base on something broader than mere feeling, for the content of the Christian consciousness. That basis would be *the experience of salvation from the disease of sin through communion with God in His Son Jesus Christ*.



It would therefore begin with the great fact of sin ; dealing first with its symptoms, and then passing on to its causes. From that it would lead on to a classification of the manifestations of sin and an estimate of their degrees of malignancy. It would then seek to penetrate the dark mystery of its ultimate issue in eternal death.

From this first part of the inquiry it would pass on to a consideration of the *divine remedy for sin*. This would be found to lie *in union with God*. The basis of such a theology would therefore be essentially mystical. Only this union would be mediated through the life and death of Jesus Christ. The methods by which this union might be effected would then be considered. These are *Imitatio Christi* and *Conversion*. This would lead to an extended examination of the Psychology of Conversion, with this distinguishing feature that, while in most psychologies of religion the mere phenomena of conversion are described and discussed, regard would here be given to the truths which gave birth to these phenomena. This would lead us to the great question of *the remedial value of Christ's sufferings*, or the psychology of the Cross. Our attitude here would again approximate Schleiermacher's. "The Redeemer by His work on the Cross assumes believers into participation with His own settled consciousness of God, and this constitutes His redeeming work."<sup>1</sup> At the same time care would be taken to guard the mind from the supposition that these sufferings are merely moral in their influence. Their value in that respect might indeed be more freely acknowledged than is usual in Protestant treatises on the atonement ; but the Christian experience would be analysed to show that their effect on the conscience can only be explained on the basis of a rational conception of them, and a conception of them as vicarious. This would naturally lead on to an examination of the Psychology of Faith as the means of receiving the divine remedy. The discussion would close with an account of

<sup>1</sup> *Der Christliche Glaube*, ii. 94, quoted by Professor Paterson, *Rule of Faith*, 356.

sanctification from the point of view followed as a recovery to soul health or holiness, and as a growth in grace to perfection. The implicates of this section would be a psychology of prayer, the sacraments, and of the Holy Spirit.

Such is a brief outline of the restatement of the Christian content to which such an attitude to the message of salvation might be expected to lead. There would be no essential change; but there would be a new standard of values. The Ritschlian phrase of "value-judgments in religion" would be heartily accepted, though not the peculiar meaning the author put into it. At the same time, Ritschl's view of the theological standpoint would be most cordially accepted. The aim is not as in science to gain a disinterested theoretical knowledge of the objects of faith. What everything turns on is the personal conviction that God, Christ, the work of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, the Church and all the other religious magnitudes of Christendom, are present and operative<sup>1</sup> for us with a view to accomplishing the end of our salvation.

The tendency therefore of such an attitude to Christian doctrine would be essentially irenic; Catholic in the broadest sense. Its standard of truth would be pragmatic. "By their fruits ye shall know them." It would realize that the heart of man is infinitely varied in its approaches. There is but one wicket-gate that leads into life, yet there are many pathways up the hill that lead to that gate. In the felicitous words of old Sir Thomas Browne, it would freely and frankly acknowledge that "that may succeed with one temper which will prove unsuccessful with another."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Justification and Reconciliation," *Versöhnung und Verfertigung*, iii. 4, quoted by Paterson.

<sup>2</sup> "Vulgar errors."

## CHAPTER II

### THE SYMPTOMS OF SIN

JOHN STUART MILL has said that if there is one fact, the reality of which is certain, it is that of evil. Beautiful as human life is, when seen from the approach of youth, there is found to rest on it under mature experience an ever-deepening shadow—as universal as the breath of life and as eternal as history. Sometimes it has settled down with such darkness on human society that its best minds have despaired of the issue altogether and seen no other possible end for the human race but a tragedy of blood. What this shadow is, no sane man, whatever his creed may be, can affect an ignorance of. It is what the Christian calls—the fact of sin.

Of sin, then, as a fact there can be no doubt; but when we go on to ask, “What is sin?” we are at once led into mystery. Three answers may be given—that of Scripture, Philosophy, and Modern Science. The Bible describes sin as disobedience to a divine law originally given in the conscience. Philosophy again sees its essence in selfishness; but whether with Pantheism it holds this selfishness to be a necessary step to a higher unity, or with Julius Müller points for its explanation to some “fall” in a pre-existent state, is a question for philosophers to dispute over. Modern Science again holds sin to be due to the conflict of “the Ape” and a higher reason, evolved by slow degrees. Mr. Tennant has made an interesting attempt to restate this last theory in terms of Christian faith.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Origin and Propagation of Sin*, Hulsean Lectures, by F. R. Tennant. See an article by the present writer in *The Expository Times*, 1905.



With these *a priori* discussions we have here nothing to do. We mention them to show how unpromising they are in leading to any final settlement. Our purpose is to tread the much more humble path of experience—to take sin as we find it, a morbid growth with its preliminary symptoms, its varied results, and its end. After that we may learn something about its nature, its remedy, and cure.

Our first inquiry will then be, the “Symptoms of Sin” or the outward indications that all is not well with the soul. In dealing with these symptoms we must remember that the gravity of a disease is not always to be tested by the gravity of its symptoms. Sir Frederick Treves, the eminent surgeon, in an address delivered to the Philosophical Institution of Edinburgh in 1905, takes the apparently paradoxical position that “the symptoms of a disease are the symptoms of its cure.” They are manifestations of the attempt which nature is making to work out its own salvation. Therefore, it is unwise to suppress them. This view will commend itself to the reason. Pain is nature’s danger-signal. To opiate it away is to run the express past the danger-point and court disaster. So with the soul. The intensity of the pain of guilt is no indication of the gravity of the disease. On the contrary, its absence is often a more dangerous symptom. In discussing spiritual symptomatology we must remember these things. We should know also the difference between early and late symptoms and, further, in what forms of sin certain symptoms are likely to be present or absent. To do this would require a complete examination of the whole field of spiritual disease. Here only the leading principles can be laid down.

1. The first symptom, then, of sin may be described as *Melancholy* or a vague *depression of the spirits*. Of course such a feeling often has a bodily root. When Elijah went to Horeb and “requested he might die”<sup>1</sup> his gloom was as much due to a physical as a spiritual root. Hence the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings xix. 4.

divine treatment begins in his case with the body and passes on to the soul. Such a lesson is often worth remembering. Serious mischief has been done to sensitive souls by the suggestion that their sadness is due to a wicked heart. It has been said that Cowper, the poet, was unwisely treated by the strong-minded Newton, and that his ultimate collapse was due to this. The statement has been vigorously denied, and there can be little doubt that Newton treated the poet with no little kindness and was often instrumental in restoring him to calm of mind. Perhaps, however, one who had a broader mind than Newton, and knew more the influence of the physical on the spiritual, would have treated "the Castaway" with more insight and therefore more success.

As a rule, we can be guided here a good deal by age. It is impossible to lay down a strict rule; but, on the whole, when depression comes to the young, one is pretty safe in tracing it to *spiritual* causes, while in middle life its source is often, if not always, physical. We do not say that even in the latter case a spiritual treatment is counter-indicated. The story of Tolstoi proves that. Still, the physical cause should in these cases be frankly acknowledged, and physical lines of cure should be combined with spiritual.

On the other hand, youthful melancholia usually points to a spiritual source. It would be inaccurate indeed to call it always a symptom of moral evil. Often it is just "the growing pains of the soul," the contrast between the Ideal and the Actual, which is one of the features of the adolescent mind, affecting it with a disgust of life. It awakes to the ideal beauty of life and love, and feels how painfully unlike the ideal is the real. Hence the sadness of young poets and preachers. It is of a sentimental rather than a real kind, and yet it has a reality of experience behind it. Such sadness is not to be regarded as a symptom of actual sin. Nevertheless, it is a symptom of soul-sickness which, if not attended to, will end in sin. It is the proof that all is not well within. It cripples the



will in its nobler endeavours, and often ends in a plunge into passion as a relief.<sup>1</sup> Soul-sadness is in fact an evidence of soul-emptiness. It is the heart dumbly expressing its dissatisfaction with itself and the world and stretching out its hand after God.

It is, therefore, one of the most constant precedents of the rise of religion. Mr. Starbuck says that among the experiences preceding conversion there is none so frequent as "depression, due to a sense of incompleteness." Taking these cases where conversion has been due to a revival, he notes that in no less than 67 per cent. of the men and 65 per cent. of the women depression is present. Where the religious life has emerged without any revival, the feeling of melancholy is present in 50 per cent. of the men and 59 per cent. of the women. Thus even in optimistic America there is no emotion so fruitful religiously as melancholy.<sup>2</sup>

The most classic "Conversion" arising from depression is that of Tolstoi, to which reference has been made. His took place when he was nearly fifty, and though he does not say it, there can be little doubt that its root was partly physical. This is clear from the fact that the cure which was "revealed" to the great novelist was as much bodily as mental. He was directed to go and work like a common labourer on the land, and in thus returning to a simple life he no doubt secured healing to his body as well as to his soul. At the same time, there can be as little doubt that the spiritual preponderated over the physical. "I was living," he says, "with a good wife who loved me and whom I loved, with good children, a large property, the respect of my kinsfolk, the praise of strangers. Suddenly," he continues, "all became flat." He longed and yet feared to die. He gave up shooting lest he should be tempted to end his life in a moment of misery. He hid all the ropes about the house when he went to bed /

<sup>1</sup> "The disadvantages of sadness I have already proved and shown that we should strive to keep it from our life" (Spinoza).

<sup>2</sup> Starbuck's *Psychology of Religion*, ch. iv.

at night lest when lying awake he should rush away to end his life like Judas. "I was afraid of life. I was impelled to leave it, and yet spite of that I still hoped something from it." He likened himself to the fabled traveller on the branch of the tree, below which a dragon is waiting to devour him, while two mice are busily gnawing off that to which he clings. "Thus hung I upon the bough of life, knowing that the dragon of death was waiting to tear me. I see but the dragon and the mice. I cannot turn my gaze from them."

Out of this deep melancholy he ascends to a higher faith, partly by a return to "the simple life," partly by a new vision of God. "One day in early spring I was alone in the forest, listening to its mysterious voices. My thoughts went back to what for these three years it was always busy with—the quest of God. Suddenly a voice within me asked, 'Why do I look further? He is here—without whom one cannot live. To acknowledge God and live are one and the same. God is what life is. Well, then, live! Seek God. There is no life without Him.' After this," he concludes, "things cleared up about me better than ever. I was saved from suicide."<sup>1</sup>

But this happy issue does not always take place, as the case of another great intellect of last century proves. In Amiel's *Journal Intime* we see a deep soul which, like a mountain lake, seems never to pass out of the shadows in which it is born. Under 17th April 1867 we read, "What needs perpetually refreshing and restoring in me is my store of courage. By nature I am so easily disgusted with life. I fall a prey so readily to pessimism. To win true peace a man needs to feel himself directed by a supreme power, to feel himself in the right road, at the point where God would have him to be. This gives strength and calm, but I have not got it. All that is, seems to me arbitrary. Nothing in my own life seems

<sup>1</sup> *My Confession*, Tolstoi—condensed. Compare an analogous experience in Mill's *Autobiography*, where the author seems to have been restored to sanity of soul by Wordsworth's poetry. Carlyle's is also similar.

providential. All is left to my own responsibility, and it is this makes me disgusted with my life. I once longed to yield myself to some grand love, to some noble end. Willingly would I have lived and died for this ideal. But once the impossibility of it was made clear, I have never taken a serious interest in anything. Sybarite and dreamer! Will you go on like this to the end? For ever tossed between duty and happiness? Incapable of resolute action?"

Unfortunately Amiel did "go on like this" to the end. He sank deeper and deeper into profound melancholy from which death only released him. The same was true of James Smetham and many others who might be mentioned.

These cases indicate how delicate must be the treatment of the *maladie imaginaire*. Two mistakes may be made. One is to cherish it. The patient should be aroused to activity and decision. He should be made to realize that joy is the proper condition of every one, else he is likely to cherish his melancholy as the sign of a noble soul and fall either into the refined sadness of an Amiel or into the less noble querulousness of those whom Dante so grimly describes as submerged in the murky recesses of the marsh of the sullen.

"Tristi fummo  
 Nell' aer dolce, che dell sol s'allegria  
 Or ci altristiam, nella celeta negra."<sup>1</sup>

In his treatment of the sullen, Dante makes the subtle point that there is a close connection between sloth and melancholy. Possibly he was led to it by his acquaintance with the monkish life in which *akedia* or *accidie* was a frequent disease sometimes leading even to suicide.<sup>2</sup> But

<sup>1</sup> *Inferno*, vii. 121-126.

"Once were we sad  
 In the sweet air made glorious by the sun;  
 Now in these murky depths have we good reason for gloom."

<sup>2</sup> See Bishop Paget's sermon on this subject—"Spirit of Discipline," sermon I.



if sloth be the cause of melancholy, work is no less its cure. To go and do something is to turn off the humours of the soul no less than those of the body. On the other hand, an opposite mistake may be made in making too little of spiritual depression. They who would heal the soul "lightly" by saying "Health! health! when there is no health" point to society and dissipation as the cure for religious depression. It is said that when Robert Burns was afflicted with unrest in his adolescent days he went to his spiritual adviser, but was told by him to go to "penny weddings." The poet succeeded in forgetting his dark thoughts, but in doing so forgot the purity and faith which had been associated with them. Spiritual depression, though symptomatic of a noble nature, is also a sign of a want there. That want is God. "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts cannot rest till they rest in Thee."<sup>1</sup> Its cure, therefore, is not to forget God but to remember Him more fully.

2. Turning now from Melancholia, we pass to a kindred but deeper symptom—The sense of *Guilt or Spiritual Pain*. This is a more objective feeling than the preceding. It may be distinguished from it as pain is from uneasiness. Guilt can usually locate its cause. Melancholy can seldom do so. Its presence, therefore, marks progress in the malady, as it is not present till sin has manifested itself in some definite action.<sup>2</sup>

The root of guilt is fear, and this fear may be three-fold—fear of our fellow-men, fear of our better self, or fear of God. The guilt that is due to the mere fear of man is the least hopeful of all forms of this feeling. It is usually the slavish terror of one's own skin or reputation, and has little or no spiritual value. This is the guilt of the child, the savage, the domesticated animal, a mere rudiment of conscience. It is a motive which must be appealed to in dealing with those who are impervious to higher appeals; but so long as it is the only motive for goodness no great

<sup>1</sup> Augustine's *Confessions*, bk. i.

<sup>2</sup> Unless it is a fancy of the brain, in which case it is a form of melancholia.



results need be anticipated. Thus attempts have been made to reform victims of lust and drink by warning of the loss of character and health; but though such motives may restrain those who are still comparatively free, they have little value for such as are under the power of these sins.

At the same time, the fear of man may lead to God, and it then will become a motive of a much higher order. So the prodigal came to his father from a very mean motive, love for his belly; and yet the father welcomed him back. The truth Christ would seem to teach is, that God will accept a man however low be the motive that brings him. But no sooner does he come into touch with God than these base motives disappear. The prodigal said nothing about his hunger when he came back—let us hope he felt none, in the love that filled his heart with higher emotions.

The second form of guilt is *Fear of one's better self*. This is a much higher emotion than the other, and we should always be on the alert to awaken and appeal to it. Dr. Arnold of Rugby made this his great appeal to his boys. "I hate to tell a lie to Arnold. He makes us feel so mean about it." There is no healthier symptom of a man than that he should fear no man so much as himself. "I do not care what others may say about me; but there is one man's opinion which I very much value, that is, the opinion of James Abram Garfield. Others I need not think about, I can get away from them; but I have to be with him all the time. He is with me when I rise up and when I lie down, when I go out and when I come in. It makes a great difference whether he thinks well of me or not."<sup>1</sup>

When a man sinks below himself, the result of such self-despising is hard to bear. "I cannot forgive myself" is his complaint, so bitter as sometimes to drive to suicide. Hence in dealing with it the soul-healer must remember that "self-despising" has always a good side. It is never

<sup>1</sup> *Life of President Garfield.*

the experience of the utterly depraved. A self must be noble ere it has the power to despise itself. Our aim must therefore be to heal rather than to probe the wound. This is best done by Hope. "We are saved by Hope."

"Wir bitten euch hoffen" was one of Goethe's favourite sayings. None could be more useful for the self-despising. Another important auxiliary is the touch of *brotherhood*. It was said of William Ross, a Scottish evangelist, that there was a "benediction in his hand." As he laid it on the shoulder of some poor reprobate, he was made to feel that he was not utterly beyond social recognition.<sup>1</sup> This was, of course, the method of Jesus—Optimism and Brotherhood; and by the wise use of it His followers may often merit the benediction which Mark Rutherford calls the Eighth Beatitude—"Blessed are they that heal us of our self-despisings."<sup>2</sup>

The deepest source of the sense of guilt, however, is *the fear of God*—the dread of His wrath, which as the Apostle says "is revealed from heaven against all . . . unrighteousness of men."<sup>3</sup> In earlier times this symptom of sin is everywhere prominent as its most marked feature. It makes itself manifest in the story of the first sin, where Adam hides from the presence of an offended God. It rises in the smoke of every burnt sacrifice. The Psalmist acknowledges it when, disregarding every other result of his wrong-doing, he cries—"Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned."<sup>4</sup> To the Prophets, God was like a burning fire.<sup>5</sup> Christ, though He came to reveal the love of God, is in His sterner parables—the Sheep and the Goats, the Wise and Foolish Virgins, and the Rich Fool—no less solemnly insistent of the same truth. And Paul sums up the whole attitude of the New Testament by pointing to a "day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his works: to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Rev. Wm. Ross of Cowcaddens, Glasgow.*

<sup>2</sup> *Autobiography of Mark Rutherford*, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. li. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. i. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Isa. xxxiii. 14, etc.

honour and incorruption, eternal life: but unto them that are factious and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil.”<sup>1</sup>

In the face of such a consensus of testimony it was impossible for the Christian conscience to put aside as a mere bogey of Judaism the conception of a Divine wrath against sin. Nor was there any tendency to do so till the present times. Bunyan’s picture of “A man with a great burden on his back and a roll in his hand, in which were written the words ‘Flee from the wrath to come,’” was regarded both by Catholic and Protestant alike as the proper opening for the Pilgrim’s Progress. In the Middle Ages religion was largely a thing of fear. One of its greatest hymns was a Hymn of Judgment—

“Dies iræ, dies illa  
Solvat sæclum in favilla.”<sup>2</sup>

Its noblest poem was a description of the life after death; and though in the opinion of the best critics its author reaches the noblest heights when he describes the joys of Paradise, he has never laid hold of the popular imagination so powerfully as when he descends into the gulf of abandoned hope and painted the depths of the Inferno.

The favourite tale of early Protestantism was the legend of Faust—the man who sells himself to the Devil, and its most thrilling scene was the midnight hour when Mephistopheles came to demand payment of the debt. Not to multiply examples, Shakespeare has voiced the general mind in some of his greatest tragedies: *Richard*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*.

“Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather  
The multitudinous seas incarnardine,  
Making the green, one red.”<sup>3</sup>

In the present generation it must be admitted the sense of guilt in this sense has very largely dulled. “The

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ii. 5-9.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas de Celano.

<sup>3</sup> *Macbeth*, ii. 2.



higher man," says Sir Oliver Lodge, "is not worrying about his sins to-day—still less about their punishment." A modern critic of *Macbeth* says: "Lady Macbeth would nowadays be ordered to Marienbad."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps; but it may still be doubted if she would benefit by the waters there.

In fact, it may be questioned if literary men or scientific men have any authority to speak on such questions. They may know something of "the higher man" or "Society woman," but they know little of the common man or everyday woman.

At the same time, we must frankly admit there is a change. It would be impossible to-day, *e.g.*, to preach such a sermon as "Sinners in the Hands of an angry God," with which Jonathan Edwards is said to have ushered in a great revival. No modern minister could make such a sermon: no audience would listen to it. But is this altogether a healthy sign? No doubt, it partly is. The religion of Jesus in the New Testament is not a religion of gloom. We do well to restore the atmosphere of believers from the churchyard gloom of mediævalism to the sunshine of New Testament faith. At the same time, is it not also due to a recession of belief? A lost sense of God in our modern life?

When we turn to consider the attitude to sin which is involved by considering it a disease of the soul, it must be plainly said that there is more confirmation of the old view in it than sympathy with the new. Remedial theology paints sin before us in no rose-water colours, but reveals it as a malady cruel in its operations and deadly in its end. It sets aside, it is true, the anthropomorphism which regards divine retribution as the fury of an enraged deity. It looks at it rather as the working out of great inexorable laws. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."<sup>2</sup> But though it recoils from the conception of an arbitrary deity, it emphasizes the reality of a Divine wrath moving inevitably against sin, present in the nature of things and

<sup>1</sup> A. B. Walkley.

<sup>2</sup> Ezek. xviii. 20.



urged there, too, by a high and holy love. God must move against sin, for it is His enemy. And it points for confirmation of this to the facts of life. The cruelty of pain; the ruthlessness of disease; the agony of death are a parable, on the physical side, of what is no less true of the spiritual. The ravages of sin are cruel realities. Spiritual death is a hideous fact. And guilt is the symptom which first fully reveals it. It is therefore not to be spirited away as a bogey of mediævalism, but seriously considered as God's danger-signal—a beneficent warning of a living as well as a holy Creator.

Thus, as we have said, Guilt is rather a hopeful symptom than a dangerous one. It shows that Conscience is not dead, and points the soul to the true remedy. Hence Christian writers have always spoken in praise of guilt, and some have been bold enough to declare that God may deliberately permit a man to fall into certain sins in order to produce within him this healthy symptom of moral dissatisfaction. Just as a man is inoculated by modern surgery with a mild form of infection in order that by contracting a disease in a weakened form he may gain an immunity to its more virulent attacks; so God may permit a soul to fall into "a horrible pit" in order that out of the pollution it becomes acquainted with there, it may rise to that penitence and faith which saves it from not only this but every other sin. "I am not afraid," says Hooker, "to affirm boldly with St. Augustine, that puffed up men receive a benefit at the hands of God and are assisted by His grace, when with His grace they are not assisted; but are permitted, and that grievously, to transgress. Ask the soul of Peter and it shall undoubtedly make you this answer . . . 'These crystal tears, wherein my sin and weakness were bewailed, have proved my endless joy. My strength hath been my ruin; but my fall hath been my stay.'"<sup>1</sup> The sense of guilt is then a great and blessed reality, and it may be hoped the present war,

<sup>1</sup> Sermon by Hooker, "On the Nature of Pride," quoted by Rev. Alex. Whyte, D.D., in a sermon "On the Praise of Guilt."

with its lesson in the appalling results of ruling God out of human affairs, will restore men to that "Holy Fear" in which the earlier saints were nourished.

3. We now pass to the third and still more advanced symptom of Sin, that of *Moral Paralysis*—the at first partial but progressive loss of self-government by the Soul.

Medical Symptomatology divides Symptoms into Objective and Subjective—those that can be detected by others, and those known by the patient himself. If we adopt this distinction, we would call Moral Paralysis an *Objective Symptom*. It affects not merely the inward feelings but also the outward volitions, and thus the sufferer is at once brought under the notice of his fellows.

Hence its distressing character. No mark of spiritual disease is more acutely felt. If the consciousness of guilt is often feeble, the sense of impotence is always present. It is the worst of all slaveries. "Man," says Rousseau, "has been born free. Why is he then in chains?"<sup>1</sup> He finds the answer in human despotism and priestly tyranny. Whether this be true or not, man's worst fetters are forged by himself. They are those that fetter not the body but the soul. Mrs. Beecher Stowe indicates the difference in picturesque fashion when she paints Uncle Tom as replying to the taunt of his master—"An't I yer master? An't yer mine now, body and soul? Didn't I pay down Twelve Hundred Dollars for all that is in yer old black shell?" But at the word soul the spirit of the slave revives. He asserts its inalienable freedom. "No! No! My soul an't yours. It's been bought and paid for by One that's able to keep it. No matter! No matter! You can't harm me!"<sup>2</sup> And he lifted his head in the proud consciousness of Spiritual Freedom.

When sin deeply fastens on the soul, this spiritual freedom disappears. This is well brought out by St. Paul in his analysis of the sinful consciousness. "The good

<sup>1</sup> *Social Contract*, ch. i.

<sup>2</sup> *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ch. xxxiii.

that I would I do not: the evil which I would not, that I practise." Speaking of that subliminal self which, like Plato,<sup>1</sup> he believes to be on the side of the good, he declares, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see a different law in my members . . . bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am!"<sup>2</sup> The picture is that of a slave, a man under the power of spiritual paralysis because he is in "the flesh." The precise meaning of the word "flesh" in Paul is often difficult to determine, because he uses it in different senses, but here, and I think generally, "the Flesh" means to Paul *human nature in a state of spiritual disease*.

This result of sin is too well known to need enlarging upon. Psychologically, it is due to the law of tendency, which is the mother of habit. Habit has, of course, a good side as well as a bad. All Education is based on it. A good education is a bundle of good habits. No success in any Art or Science is possible until its technique has been so learned as to become a "second nature."

It is, however, a curious thing that we are much less able to form good habits than evil ones. While the will is easily able to throw off a good habit or change it to something different, the reverse is true with a bad one. Indeed, there is no surer criterion of a good or bad habit than the slavery it imposes on the will. "Character," says Novalis, "is a perfectly formed will," and a character which is eaten through by evil shows its morbid condition chiefly in this, that the will is determined by habit instead of habit being under control of the will.

Why, it may be asked, need the will have greater control over a good than an evil habit? The answer must surely be, because of an original bias toward evil. "We are men of mixed blood," and thus, while it is always comparatively easy to alter a good habit, the opposite is the case with evil ones. They run in the line of one

<sup>1</sup> "All men are unwillingly deprived of the good" (Phædrus).

<sup>2</sup> Rom. vii. 14-25.



cleavage, and thus often acquire extraordinary power in a short time.

So far as the treatment of Moral Paralysis is concerned, little need be written here. It demands a radical remedy; symptomatic treatment is of no value. Sometimes ministers or friends are approached by some one, a wife, or mother, or friend, on behalf of one deeply enslaved. A request is made for a "serious word" with the unfortunate victim of Drink or some other vice. Usually this request is made when the victim is far gone in the disease. To hope to cure such an one by a "serious word" is a melancholy delusion. To change a deep-seated malady like moral paralysis only two courses are possible. You must change the physical basis of life, or you must change the spiritual basis of life; or, best of all, you must aim at doing both at the same time.

4. Passing now to the most advanced symptoms of spiritual disease, we come to *Loneliness of Soul*, a loneliness expressing itself first in a desire to get away from God, but ending also in a misanthropic condition towards all society—a *hatred alike of God and Man*.

Of this loneliness the classic instance is Judas Iscariot, of whom the Evangelist says, "He went out, and it was night."<sup>1</sup> John no doubt introduces the outer darkness of nature as a fit environment to, and symbol of, the outer darkness of his spirit. In this separation from man and God, of which sin is at once the beginning and the end, we may note three stages.

There is first a *separation from God*. The source of all spiritual disease is, as we have seen, the loss of the God-consciousness in the soul. When a man, therefore, enters on a course of evil he shuts out God from the soul. Prayer becomes at first an unreality, later an unwelcome thing, and at last it is altogether discontinued. This is the first form of this symptom—aversion to the thought of God. As the Psalmist says, "I remembered God, and was troubled."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John xiii. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lxxvii. 3.



But though the sinner may try to shut God out of his soul, God does not at first acquiesce in His dismissal. His "Spirit strives with man,"<sup>1</sup> and hence that uneasiness and guilt which are the earlier symptoms of spiritual deterioration. There comes, however, a period when this striving ceases. The divine spirit withdraws from the fruitless contest as Jesus did at this moment from Judas, saying, "That thou doest, do quickly."<sup>2</sup> When this is reached, there would seem to be an absolute separation between the soul and God, and the result is that restlessness and loneliness which are the precursors of spiritual death.

Along with this separation from the divine comes a corresponding *alienation from the human*. When Cain "went out from the presence of the Lord"<sup>3</sup> he became a vagabond from his fellow-men as well as a fugitive from God. The confederacy of crime built on selfishness, not love, breaks down at last as Judas' friends broke away from him when he had dyed his hands too red for polite society. "What is that to us? See thou to it."<sup>4</sup>

Finally, the soul feels a certain restlessness even in the *society of itself*. There comes a period when a man cannot bear to be alone with his own thoughts. He cries out like Milton's Satan :

"Which way I fly is hell. Myself am hell."<sup>5</sup>

We have a picture of this lonely misanthropy in the famous saying of Tiberius to the Roman Senate, "What to write to you Conscript Fathers, or what not to write to you may all the gods and goddesses torment me more than I am tormented every day, if I know." It is the last symptom of sin—the sign of spiritual death, the end of which is the disintegration of all the ties of love which binds the human personality to its kind

<sup>1</sup> Gen. vi. 3.

<sup>2</sup> John xiii. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. iv. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xxvii. See a pre-sermon by Dr. John Ker, "The End of Evil Association."

<sup>5</sup> *Paradise Lost*, ii.

—the isolation of a loveless, hopeless soul. Lewis Morris in his *Epic of Hades* has given an effective picture of it:

“They seemed alone  
Those prisoners through all time. Each soul shut fast  
In its own goal of woe. Apart, alone,  
Forevermore alone. No thought of kin  
Or kindly human glance or fellowship  
Of suffering or of sin, made light the load  
Of solitary pain. . . .  
. . . Hopeless sin  
Rots slow in solitude, nor sees the face  
Of men, nor hears the sound of speech, nor feels  
The touch of human hand, but broods a ghost  
Hating the bare blank cell, that other self  
Which brought it hither, hating man and God  
And all that is or has been.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Epic of Hades*, 22nd ed., p. 6.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SOURCES OF SOUL-SICKNESS

IN investigating the origins of Sin, theologians have usually gone back to a moral catastrophe at the dawn of human history from which in some way an original predisposition to evil has been inherited. The theory has been lately objected to on the grounds of science. The facts, it is said, do not bear out the hypothesis. Human history, so far as we know it, is a development and not a retrogression. Regarding this it must be said that we have really no reliable facts at all as to the origin of the human race. Some facts seem to favour a primeval barbarism ; others, not less impressive, a primal simplicity.

Fortunately such a discussion is quite outwith the limits of our inquiry. We have to deal here with "phenomena," not with "noumena"—to use Kant's phrase. We have to consider the origins of soul-sickness as we see them in human experience without entering into metaphysical discussions as to the origin of evil. In one respect, however, at least, we receive for our inquiry a most valuable legacy of truth from the old theological explanation of the origin of sin. This is the undoubted fact that there is a hereditary element in the origin and propagation of soul-sickness. The Bible story may put this in a picture when it says, "In Adam all die" ;<sup>1</sup> but the picture contains a scientific truth which "Remedialism" in Theology only emphasizes more strongly. At the root of the malady of evil there lies a hereditary taint, a bias or pre-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 22.



disposition, without which the solicitation of temptation would have no power of appeal.

This has been denied by Mr. Tennant in his discussion on the "Origin of Sin," already referred to.<sup>1</sup> Favours the view of Weismann that only natural, not acquired, qualities can be inherited, he attempts to explain the universality of sin by the influence of environment and education. The attempt, however, is a failure. The Psychology of childhood, as modern observers prove, refutes it.<sup>2</sup> However carefully educated a child may be, however pure his environment, moral perfection is not to be looked for. It has to be won by discipline: it is not the gift of nature. The innocence which poetry has justly adored in the little child is due to the beauty and comparative purity with which Nature has invested all young life. This purity and beauty is not, however, inconsistent with slumbering germs of selfishness and animalism, which when maturity draws near awake and may exert a malignant power. Modern education, therefore, as built on Psychology, would dismiss the theory of a perfect child as based on fancy, not on fact.

To the observation of Psychology may be added the general opinion of Medical Science. It has been proved to demonstration that if not disease at least predisposition to disease is a matter of inheritance. Now, if this be true of the physical side of man, what right have we to deny it in the realm of spirit? It has been said there can be no heredity where there are not physical characteristics inherited. Even granting this, what right have we to declare that physical characteristics cannot be evolved out of a long history of ancestral sin? If Darwinism is permitted to build her vast superstructure on the transmission of variations, surely it is the height of folly to suppose that a spiritual change so radical as soul-sickness would not leave a physical trace on the material basis of life, to be inherited by succeeding generations. As a

<sup>1</sup> Hulsean Lectures on *The Origin and Propagation of Sin*.

<sup>2</sup> Perez, *The First Three Years of Childhood*, p. 66.



matter of fact, medicine proves that physical diseases which have so close a kinship with the spiritual as Intemperance, Criminal Sensuality and Insanity are very strongly hereditary. And the presumption is, so strongly as almost to amount to a demonstration, that all spiritual weaknesses, like all physical, leave a more or less powerful bias on the descendants of those whose parents suffered from them.

Besides these proofs drawn from outward observation there is what we may call "the spiritual proof"—that, namely, drawn from the testimony of one's own consciousness. It is a curious fact, to which we have already adverted, that we find it much more easy to do wrong than to do right. Spiritual gravitation, like Physical, is downward. Not towards self-control or self-sacrifice do we naturally incline, but to sloth, self-indulgence, animalism. Virtue is the prize of struggle; vice, the natural goal of drift. Why should this be? If man were healthy it would be all the other way. It is beside the question to say with the socialist, this is due to environment. Granted it be so, which it is not, it would still have to be pointed out that this diseased environment is the original product of man's spiritual life, when there was no social system at all. If the fruit be evil, the root must be corrupt. The testimony of conscience, too, is on this question irrefragable. The disinclination to goodness, universal to the natural man, is a proof amounting to the force of intuition, that there is such a thing as an original bias to evil in the very texture of the soul. Explain it as you will, the Christian doctrine of original sin rests on a profound basis of Scientific as well as Theological reality. In the words of Browning, who saw in this doctrine one of the best reasons for believing in the Christian faith:

"I still to believe it true  
See reasons and reasons;—this to begin,  
'Tis the faith launched its dart  
At the head of a lie, taught original sin,  
The corruption of man's heart."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Gold Hair: a Tale of Pornic."

First amongst the sources of soul-sickness we must therefore always place an *original bias to evil due to heredity*. Such a predisposition, we need hardly say, has no moral guilt attaching to it. It can only develop into actual sin when excited by some external stimulus. It is only a predisposition to sin, nothing more.

Another of these predisposing causes, which is being more and more emphasized to-day, is *that of an unhealthy environment*, or Moral Insanitation as we might call it in medical language. Of course we speak here only relatively. There is no perfectly pure atmosphere in this world. To get into a perfectly pure environment it would be necessary to "go out of the world." The history of asceticism is a proof that solitude is not a synonym for sinlessness. Where the cell walls are narrowed by self, one tenant is enough to infect their air with the miasma of death. On the other hand, it must be firmly asserted that a certain cubic space is as essential to the health of the soul as it is to that of the body. The two important constituents in a healthy spiritual atmosphere are purity and reverence; and they are alike difficult to maintain in one-roomed houses. When families huddle together in unhealthy familiarity with all the functions of the body, the effect on the soul can be easily imagined. The bloom of purity is rubbed off, and reverence is difficult if not unknown. "Having shut thy door, pray," said Jesus;<sup>1</sup> but how is it possible to shut the door when there is none to shut? Hence the soul in such an atmosphere tends to become as sickly as the body; and a sickly soul is the opportunity of temptation for grosser sins. "If thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door."<sup>2</sup>

One of the most healthy signs of Christian thought to-day is the increased interest in the social question. "The social question is the question of to-day and of to-morrow."<sup>3</sup> It was indeed time. This is an age of great cities, and "overcrowding" in the city is an infinitely

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. iv. 7.

<sup>3</sup> *The Christian Ethics of Social Life*, Rev. W. Dickie, D.D.; *Christianity and Social Ethics*, p. 7. See also Chapter XVIII.

greater moral evil than "congestion" in the country. In the latter there may be danger to the body, but in the former both soul and body are necessarily destroyed in a social Hell. An evangelism that has no "social wing" is bound to fail, and that for the simple reason that it is unscientific. It is as foolish to cure the soul and neglect the body as it is to cure the body and neglect the soul.

Passing now from Heredity and Environment as predisposing causes of soul-sickness, we come to consider the more or less direct incentives to the actual outbreak of positive sin. The first and perhaps the most important of these is that of *Infection by the direct action of Temptation*. The whole atmosphere of life is, as we have seen, infected by germs of sin; though some sections of it are infinitely more so than others. Such germs of evil, however, do not affect the soul until by Temptation they gain entrance into it and become identified with it by the assent of the will.

What is the Avenue through which these germs of evil enter the soul? There is good reason to believe that it is that of the Imagination. This was noticed as long ago as Thomas à Kempis, who in well-known words has said: "In every act of sin there are four stages—Cogitatio, Imaginatio, Delectatio, Assentio."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the only criticism one could make on this is in regard to the third stage—"Delectatio." Temptations are not always temptations of delight. No doubt they are so often, as in the Bible story of the first sin, "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes—she took of the fruit thereof and did eat."<sup>2</sup>

Here the temptation has to be formed into an image of delight before it can enter the armour of the soul. On the other hand, the story of the second sin, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat,"<sup>3</sup> presents us with Imagination acting not on the sensation of delight but on the emotion of Fear. It terrifies the soul by the image of what is to come, and

<sup>1</sup> *Imitatio Christi*.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. iii. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. iii. 12.



thus tempts it to find refuge in moral cowardice. In both cases Imagination is the Avenue, but in one case it leads to Delight, in the other to Fear.

The power of the Imagination as an incentive to evil is specially seen in Sensuality, and, unfortunately, there seems no faculty which is more easily stimulated into activity by sensuality than it. There are some imaginations which can only quicken at the solicitation of the flesh; with the frequent result that after a period of such "mental" sin—if the phrase be permitted—a sudden spark falling on the soul issues in an explosion of irresistible passion. "Woe to them that devise iniquity . . . upon their beds! When the morning is light they practise it."<sup>1</sup>

The same, however, is true of other forms of evil. Thus in Tito Melema's desertion of his foster-father we have a soul surprised into baseness by a previous preparation of deceit. George Eliot paints Tito as hardly conscious of the baseness of his deed till it was done; and makes the wise comment: "There are moments when one's passions speak and decide for us, and we seem to stand by and wonder. They carry in them an inspiration of crime that in one instant does the work of long premeditation."<sup>2</sup>

The practical lesson of this is so obvious as hardly to need pointing out. Give temptation no time. Let the imagination be lifted from its object of forbidden delight or fear into another atmosphere. This can be either done by flight, as in the case of Joseph,<sup>3</sup> or, what is better, by raising it to a nobler exercise, as St. Paul directs in his cure for Alcoholism.<sup>4</sup> The channel of thought should immediately be changed by resolutely turning it to a different object. This, however, is often the difficult thing to do; and therefore the true cure for temptation is, as Chalmers would say, "the expulsive power of a new affection."

Passing now to another and more potent source of sin, we come to *the active agency of men and women in the*

<sup>1</sup> Mic. ii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xxxix. 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Romola*, ch. xxii.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. v. 18.



*propagation of sin*, or temptation by means of the *personal influence of one man upon another*.

If the first form of temptation—that due to the presence of sinful objects of desire—may be likened to the *Infection of a Noxious Germ*, this may be regarded as *Soul-contagion*, i.e. the infection of healthy souls by those which are already spiritually diseased. The importance of this as a source of soul-sickness is suggested by the story of the first sin. In the case of Eve, sin enters by the solicitation of the Serpent; in Adam, by that of Eve. Probably this is true of most of the “great sins.” We are led into them either by imitation or solicitation. For personal influence may be either conscious or unconscious. In childhood and adolescence the unconscious influence is the more important. The child’s whole “vocation” is “endless imitation.” In this lies at once its promise and its danger. Man is at once educated and demoralized by his power of imitation. As the soul becomes more fixed by the years, this influence becomes less potent. It may even react against it. This is the explanation of the curious fact that the children of drunken parents are sometimes themselves remarkable for sobriety. In the plastic years of infancy the habits of temperance had been learned; perhaps at a period when both their parents had been sober and pure. Hence, when manhood or womanhood was reached, a father’s or mother’s declension acted rather as a warning than an example. If, on the other hand, the parents’ fall dates from the years of their children’s infancy, the results upon them can only be disastrous.

Though the power of unconscious influence lessens as life advances, it always remains a formidable factor in temptation. “We usually exaggerate the value of our words,” says Henry Drummond; “we always underestimate the influence of our deeds.” This is specially seen in popular movements. The multitudes tend to go, like sheep, in crowds. Hence the fact, which the student of social maladies has always to take into account, that sin is infinitely more dangerous when it takes on *an*

*Epidemic form.* Certain sins are *Endemic*. They are part of the nature of things, as things are at present constituted. They are the offspring of hunger and lust—"the raw material of sin"<sup>1</sup>—and are always with us. But besides these "ageless sins," there are spiritual epidemics which rise up with extraordinary rapidity and sinister significance in certain lands or at certain times. Thus "Usury" has always been endemic in the Jewish race, but it has been epidemic in those times when the fires of patriotism burnt low, and the heart of Israel had nothing else to feed itself upon. Drunkenness would seem to be a failing of the Anglo-Saxon race; but it has been epidemic during the last century, though there are signs that it is now becoming less virulent. Gambling again seems to have taken on an epidemic form, both in English and American lands. Opium smoking is epidemic in China. Lubricity was the goddess of France; but perhaps the great war will burn it out. Godless commercialism reigns in Germany, while apathy and superstition dominate Russia. No doubt there are many other deep-seated reasons for these national sins; but undoubtedly one of the chief is spiritual contagion. They are "in the air." They become the fashion. They cannot therefore be combated individually. Epidemics of evil must be met by epidemics of goodness. Public opinion has to be re-formed. In effecting this, the Public Press is a powerful agency, and it is greatly to be regretted that its influence is often so little regarded by Christian men. It is here, too, that the prophet finds his vocation and effects his reformation; though he often perishes himself in the conflagration which his words excite, purifying the air "as by fire."

The other form of spiritual contagion is that of *conscious influence* or direct personal solicitation. Here the case is entirely different. Man becomes the tempter of his fellow, and tries to draw him into the same abyss as himself. It should not be impossible for the legislator to step in and purify the cities of its walking plagues.

<sup>1</sup> Professor Tennant (*ut supra*).



If infective bodies are removed from our streets, why not infective souls? Legislation has of late moved in this direction a little; and in so doing she should be encouraged. No fetish of "liberty" should give morally tainted men and women the right to poison the air. Enlightened municipalities have been opening places for confirmed inebriates to be confined in. This power should be extended, and our centres of population should be cleared of those who are no better than moral plagues.

We may conclude this examination of the "Etiology of Sin" by a reference to what the Bible calls *Backsliding*, as a *frequent and potent source of sin*. Backsliding in medical language may be called *spiritual relapse*. It is not in itself an original cause of sin. There must have been a previous attack of the disease; but it is a most powerful adjunct to temptation in its appeal to an infected soul. This is due to a law of the psychical life we have already referred to—the law of tendency. What we have done once we have a tendency more or less strong to do again. Even the name we have once forgotten, we strive, often in vain, to recall. Psychologists tell us that this is based on the effect which repeated actions have on the molecules of the brain. As a glove, after you have put it on once or twice, gets into the shape of your hand, so, it is said, with the brain. By repeated action in a certain direction it becomes moulded like the glove to the hand, and a tendency or habit is formed.<sup>1</sup> That this is true with regard to the mechanical habits of the body, such as the fingering of piano playing, there seems no room for doubt; but that it should be true of the spiritual habits, of drinking or opium smoking, is to our mind open to question. There we should think the molecular action of brain upon soul must be so small as to be not worth regarding. It is more likely that the law of tendency is originally created by a purely mental action; although this may undoubtedly be increased by physical effects produced by it on the organism.

<sup>1</sup> Professor James's *Psychology*, vol. i. p. 243.

But, however produced, its effect is undeniable. It is at once a means of education and an engine of destruction. In it lies the possibility of progress; and in it is the secret of the rapidity of deterioration.

There are certain sins, of course, which are more open to this influence than others. Such are the sins of "the flesh." The sin of impurity once committed, the chances are so increased that there is an actual probability of its being committed again. No doubt a first offence may be neutralized in its effects by the shame and guilt which attends it. Still when this shame passes off the tendency will usually be found to be established. Therefore it should always be the Soul Healer's duty to emphasize the infinite importance of making the first lapse into sin the final one, else a chronic condition of evil will be established which will be more or less difficult to cure. Sin then becomes the reversion, if not to nature, at least to second nature.

Another danger of backsliding is the falsification of the religious experience which often attends it. In breaking away from some chronic sin the soul is often moved to its depths by some great appeal. When this is followed by relapse into the old sin, all hope that salvation is possible is often taken away. The evil spirit returns with seven other spirits worse than itself, and the last state is worse than the first. In dealing with such distressing cases the Spiritual Teacher is "saved by hope." A persistent optimism is his most precious possession, and in order to reinforce such a hope it may be here remarked that it is not unscientific to believe in a complete revolution of the spiritual life even after sin has become chronic in the soul. The question will be more fully discussed when we come to conversion; here it need only be remarked that experience of the most incontestable kind reveals the possibility of such a cataclysm in the soul taking place. In a few hours the habits of a lifetime may be overthrown with apparently every tendency to return to the old life becoming utterly obliterated. Psychology in its efforts



to explain this extraordinary phenomenon has been driven to the hypothesis of a sub-conscious self, which, lying beneath the ordinary life of daily action, is largely untouched by the habits it may form. This, bursting forth from its depths like some hidden volcano may suddenly change the whole face of the spiritual nature.

How far true such a hypothesis may be we shall consider afterwards. Meanwhile in noting the undoubted facts on which it rests we have also to note that these facts are on the whole unusual. As a rule, the law of the spiritual nature is that habits once formed are *not* changed. "Sow an act and you reap a habit ; sow a habit and you reap a character." Hence the great danger of Spiritual Relapse or Backsliding. The spiritual worker should always regard it as one of the most serious phenomena ; especially when attended by the falsification of some past experience. While never forgetting the hopefulness of such prophecies as "I will heal their backslidings ; I will love them freely,"<sup>1</sup> he should always remember the solemn, perhaps too inexorable words of the writer to the Hebrews : "As touching those who were once enlightened, and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost . . . and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance ; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame."<sup>2</sup>

Such are the chief sources of Soul-sickness. From a consideration of them we may regard sin as a *hereditary taint which, fostered in an impure environment, springs into being by the onset of some germ of evil received through temptation. Once established, it is greatly increased by the law of tendency and the power of recurrence.*

We may close this discussion with a word about *the degrees of sin*, or the gravity or comparative slightness with which persons may be affected by it. Why do certain succumb so readily to temptation ? Why do they

<sup>1</sup> Hos. xiv. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. vi. 4.

go so deeply into sin? Why is their case so grave from the outset? No doubt in the vast majority of cases this is due either to Environment or Heredity. Heredity, says Dale somewhere, does not fix a man's fate, it only fixes his trial. Granted that it is so, it must be admitted that the trial it fixes is very great; in a large proportion so great as practically to amount to his fate. There is, however, always a number left, a residuum of conquerors over "their birth's invidious bar"; large enough to show that this is not the whole story—that there must be some other secret, some other reason of man's conquest over destiny. What is this? The Theologian will say "Divine Grace." This is true, but how does it act?

The answer to this question brings us to what is the deepest thought in this chapter. It is this, that Temptation and Environment can only overcome a man whose nature *is already enfeebled by Spiritual Anæmia*. Let a strong, full-blooded healthy man pass into the atmosphere of infection and he will remain immune, or if he is attacked he will throw off the onset of sin with ease. This immunity and power of resistance, according to the latest Physiology, is in part due to the presence in the human blood of certain little bodies, whose meaning there, so long a mystery, is now found to lie in the fact that they act as the soldiers of the blood, attacking the germs of diseases and destroying them by devouring them up.<sup>1</sup> When these phagocytes are abundant and strong the body is healthy. It can quickly throw off disease or resist infection.

If this be the last word in the etiology of infectious disease, has it not a spiritual counterpart in the diseases of the soul? "The blood is the life," and the blood of the soul is the secret of its eternal life. And what is this? Christ has answered the question for us. "He that drinketh My blood hath eternal life." "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Metchnikoff's *Nature of Man* (trans. 1903), p. 239.

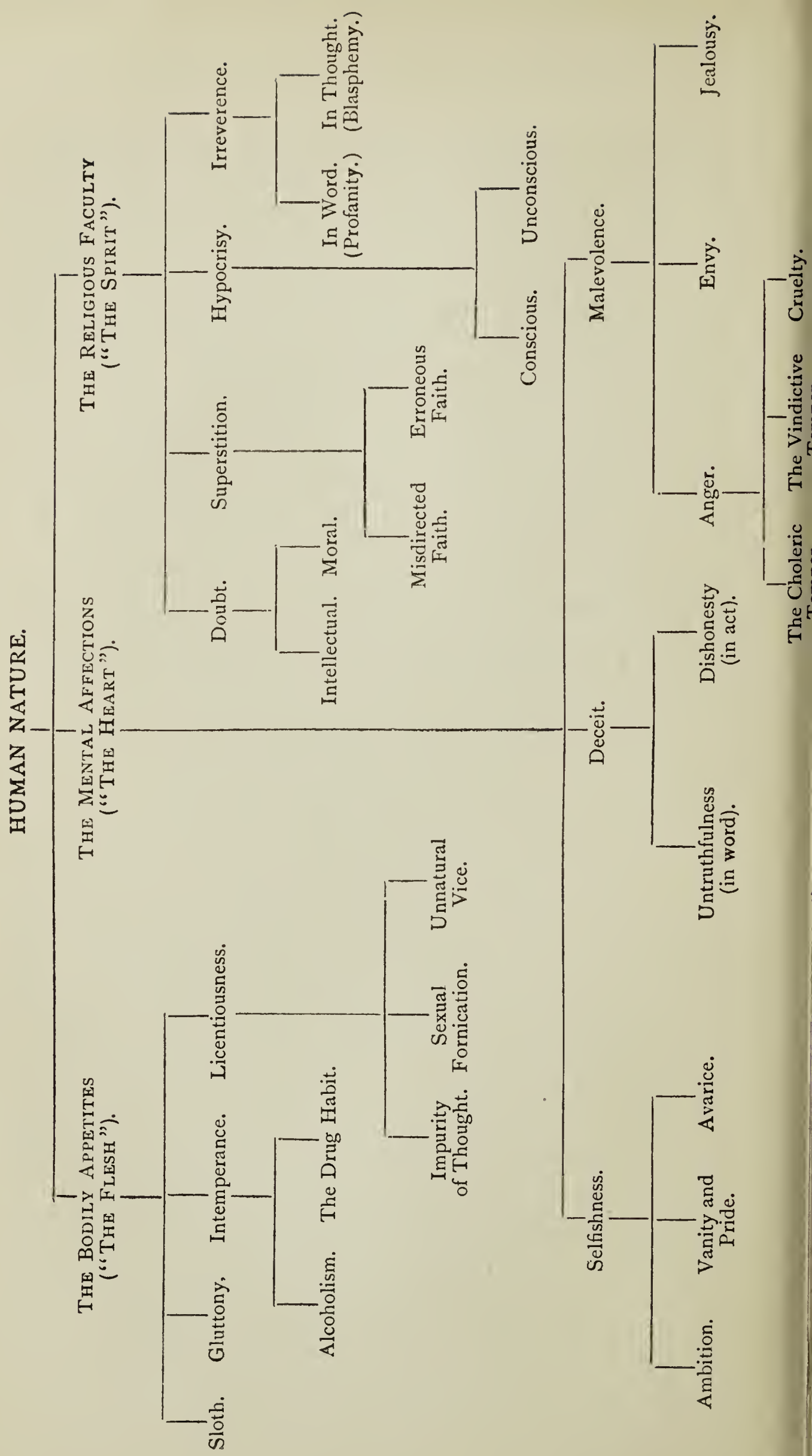
<sup>2</sup> John vi. 54 and xvii. 3.

The health of the soul, therefore, lies in the knowledge of God. To be filled with the knowledge of God is to be filled with "a blood" which defies Spiritual Death. To have the avenues between God and the soul clogged means feebleness, lack of vitality, what we have called Spiritual Anæmia. The deepest root of sin, therefore, is simply the want of God in the soul of man. To have God is life, to be without God is disease and death. As to how this life of God is to flow clear and unimpeded into the soul, we must refer the reader to a later chapter when we come to speak of the remedy of sin. Meanwhile we may close our inquiry with the beautiful words of the old Mystic: "Everything rests in the condition in which it was born. If a bird gets into the water it dies. If a fish gets into the air it dies. Throw a stone up to the heavens and it returns to the earth; for the earth is its fatherland. God is our fatherland, and if we live outside God we too must die."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *John of the Sterngassen*, quoted by Sir W. Robertson Nicoll.



## TABLE OF SPIRITUAL DISEASES.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE NATURAL HISTORY OF SIN

**I**N the previous pages prominence has been given to the solidarity of sin. The morbid phenomena of the Soul have been traced to a single root, and followed to a single end. That root is the loss of the God-consciousness in the soul, and its fruit is its dissolution in eternal death.

We may, however, regard moral evil from a different point of view. No less impressive than its solidarity is its infinite variety. As a disease like Tuberculosis may have but one root and yet exhibit the most varied forms according to the regions it attacks, so the solidarity of sin is compatible with the utmost divergence in its manifestations. Sin is one, and yet sin is "legion."

In this and the following chapters we propose giving an account of these manifestations. In this one we shall make an attempt to classify them. To place these sins is to give a clue to their nature and treatment. In doing so we shall follow the usual method of medical classification—that of origin and region of operations. We must, therefore, as a preliminary make a psychological "dissection" of the soul, examining its faculties and seeing how sin attacks these.

There are, of course, other ways of classifying sin. We may do so, *e.g.*, from the point of view of their guilt, as Dante does in the *Divine Comedy*. In that poem the geography of the Inferno depends on the "depths of sin." Each circle is conditioned by the heinousness of the sins of the offenders in it. Thus the first class includes those

who are incontinent in the use of legitimate faculties or desires, such are the Sensual, the Gluttonous, the Avaricious, the Prodigal, the Wrathful, the Slothful and the Heretics. These last form a transition between the upper and lower Hell. On the one side they are only incontinent in the use of a legitimate faculty, the Reason. On the other, however, they are rebels against God, and thus belong to the Violent.

This brings us to the Second Hell. It has three divisions—violence against one's fellow-men (Murder), against self (Suicide), against God (Blasphemy). The Third Hell includes fraud in all its forms—Betrayers of Women, Flatterers, Simoniacs, Magic-mongers, Swindlers, Hypocrites, Thieves, Evil Counsellors, Schismatics, Falsifiers. The lowest Hell is that of the treacherous. It has four classes: traitors to kindred, country, friends and, worst of all, great benefactors. In this Judas is placed, as traitor to the greatest of all Benefactors.

The grandeur of Dante's vision of sin is obvious. Yet as a scientific classification its defects are palpable. Even from the point of view of its own principle, it is not always convincing. The placing of Brutus in the lowest Hell cannot be defended. More serious, however, is a tendency to cross-division. This has indeed been disputed. "He was far too clear a thinker," says Dr. Carroll, "to commit such a blunder."<sup>1</sup> Yet how can we evade such a feeling when we see the love of money appearing again and again—first as Avarice, then as Simony, then as Usury and apparently worst of all as Theft? The fact is, Dante was not thinking of a scientific classification in his poem. He was governed partly by theological deference to the great Aquinas, partly by imaginative considerations.

In his Introduction, however, he suggests a more scientific division. This is his encounter with the three wild beasts in the Wood of Error as he is seeking for the Sunlit Mountain of truth. These beasts are a Lion, a Panther, and a Wolf, and they are usually interpreted as

<sup>1</sup> *Exiles of Eternity*," by Dr. J. S. Carroll, p. 17.



a symbolic representation of "the lust of the Flesh," "the lust of the Eyes," and "the Pride of Life."<sup>1</sup> The value of such a classification is that it has regard to the root of all sin—*Selfish Desire*. We must, therefore, go down to the appetitive side of human nature: we must dissect it and examine its legitimate and illegitimate exercise in order to be truly scientific. In other words, to be logical we must be psychological.

Looking at John's classification from this point of view, we see that, though true, it does not go far enough. Sensuality, Avarice and Pride do not cover the whole of man's illegitimate affections. There are religious maladies, *e.g.*, such as Hypocrisy, Heresy and Superstition, which cannot fairly be included under them.

We must have a wider principle to go by, and this is suggested by Paul when he prays that God would sanctify his converts "wholly," that their "spirit and soul and body" might be "preserved entire, without blame"<sup>2</sup> at the second advent. The division here is as Dr. Heard says, "tripartite,"<sup>3</sup> and though we do not agree with all that Dr. Heard says on that division, we believe it is one which is true to "common sense" and in harmony with the general teaching of the New Testament.

Let us begin with the last two elements in the division—soul and body. Man comes before us as a being of flesh and blood, with the physical appetites necessary for their preservation. On the other hand, man is also a Soul, with an intellectual and spiritual life, reaching out to higher things. It is through the interaction of these that sin emerges. "Hunger and Lust are the raw material of sin," because they are the hunger and lust of immortal beings. If man were a mere animal he would have no conscience, and therefore no accountability. He would be driven on by his simple instincts; and acts which are sin to him as a Soul would be no sin to him as a mere body. On the other hand, this spiritual

<sup>1</sup> I John ii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> I Thess. v. 23.

<sup>3</sup> *The Tripartite Nature of Man*, J. B. Heard, D.D.

nature not only creates the "knowledge of sin," but it aggravates these desires which make sin. If man were a mere animal he would not be tempted to go to the awful excesses into which his larger life drives him. He would be content with the simpler appetites of the lower creation. It is because he is flesh, and yet more than flesh, that he is driven into these depths of degradation which we call "the lusts of the Flesh."

Thus the first division of moral maladies will naturally be the "Diseases of the Flesh,"<sup>1</sup> using the word "Flesh" to denote the appetites of the Body perverted by a disordered mind. These include Gluttony, or the incontinent desire for Food; Sloth, or the extravagant love of Rest; Intemperance, or the illegitimate use of Stimulants; and Fornication, or the depraved exercise of the Reproductive Function. The desires of which these vices are the perversion are in themselves legitimate, and, therefore, as has been remarked, Dante classes them among the less heinous sins. In this he was no doubt right, but perhaps too much has been made of his tolerance of the sensual sins. It is a vast mistake, *e.g.*, to suppose that because Christ regarded the victims of impurity with compassion He therefore thought little of their sins. Rather the greatness of His pity is to be regarded as the measure of the infinite loathing He had for their sin. He looked on those who suffered from such a malady as a physician might regard the patient of a most hopeless and repulsive disease. He tracked, however, the sin to its source, and declared that the impure thought was as defiling as the adulterous act.

Passing now to *the Soul* as a region of spiritual malady, we cannot but think that though the twofold division of Soul and Body may commend itself to the common sense of the unreflective, the threefold division of St. Paul—into

<sup>1</sup> Paul uses "Flesh" in a wider sense, to refer to human nature generally in a state of disease. See Scott Fletcher, *Psychology of the New Testament*, pp. 124-140.



Body, Soul and Spirit—is based on a truer analysis of human nature. For when we consider the mental life of Man we cannot but see that from the Christian point of view at least—and indeed from the point of view of Idealism generally—it naturally divides itself into two great classes of phenomena: the moral and the spiritual. The moral side of man includes all those actions of his intellectual nature which are directed to personal ends—to the enrichment and development of his human life. In themselves these actions spring from desires which are not only legitimate but praiseworthy. They have for their aim that self-realization which is the true end of all human effort. They are motivated by the desire for the fullest development of all those higher powers with which God has endowed the soul.

In themselves, then, they are legitimate and praiseworthy, but they may be pursued in an illegitimate way. They are so when they are employed selfishly, to the undue aggrandizement of personal ends and to the injury of our neighbours. It is difficult to find a name to denote these sins of *the Soul*, as St. Paul calls them. The word Soul as we use it has a higher signification to us than the word Psyche, which we have translated here, has to the Apostle. To him it means the “natural” man, these desires and ambitions which spring from his intellectual powers apart from any reference to God or a higher life. Perhaps, therefore, the best description of them would be—*Spiritual Diseases of the Heart*. They are a very large class, and as the vices which arise from them often run into each other, they are a little difficult to differentiate. We have found it useful to subdivide them further into those which are distinguished by an *exaggerated love for self* and those marked by a *depreciation in the love we owe to others*—the one being the positive, the other the negative, side of Selfishness. The first includes such vices as Ambition, Avarice, Pride and Jealousy; the other Lying, Theft, Hatred in all its forms, Envy, Treachery and Cruelty.

Passing now from the Natural, we come to the Spiritual



Man. In the text already referred to, Paul distinguishes the Psychical or Natural from the Pneumatic or Spiritual Man. This distinction is not always adhered to in Scripture. The Bible is not a scientific manual. Nevertheless, it is implicit even in the Old Testament, and it is definitely held by St. Paul. This is admitted by the most recent writers in Psychology. Thus Mr. Scott Fletcher says: "The Bible in general speaks of Man as having not merely a soul but a spirit. In the New Testament special emphasis is laid on this truth, and a development of thought is noticeable in its teaching concerning the spirit, when compared with the Old Testament."<sup>1</sup>

It would be going beyond our scope to go into all the passages which bear out this statement. We may, however, refer to the classic one in 1 Cor. xv., where St. Paul defends the doctrine of a Resurrection on the ground that man is more than a mere Soul or Psyche, dependent for his existence on a body of flesh and blood. Man is also a Pneuma, or Spirit, independent of the body, and having therefore in him "the promise and the potency of eternal life." "It is sown," he says, "a natural (psychical) body; it is raised a spiritual (pneumatic) body."<sup>2</sup>

From this and kindred statements, some have indeed thought that St. Paul regards the Spirit as not original to Man but given by God to him on his regeneration by the Divine Spirit. This is Weiss's view,<sup>3</sup> but it has been vigorously attacked and is now generally abandoned. The best proof of that is St. Paul's prayer in the text we have already quoted,<sup>4</sup> for its complete Sanctification. If the Pneuma were only given man at his regeneration by the Divine Spirit, it would surely be free from imperfection and impurity, but so far from this being the case no part of man's nature needs Sanctification more. "The deterioration of the best is the worst," and gross as the sins

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology of the New Testament*, by Scott Fletcher, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 44. Cf. also 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, Eng. trans., vol. i. p. 346.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Thess. v. 23.

of the body and cruel as those of the mind, more tragic are those of the spirit. The history of religion is at once the grandest and saddest chapter in the story of man. Men have done in the name of God what they had never dared in the name of the devil.

The Spiritual faculty is, then, like the other two, a fruitful field of disease. Its morbid conditions—seldom indeed found alone—may be classed into four great divisions, connected with its leading organ—Doubt, the deficiency of Faith ; Superstition, the misdirection of Faith ; Hypocrisy, the insincerity of Faith ; and Blasphemy, the open contempt and hatred of Faith.

Such is our general Classification of Spiritual Diseases. To make it clear, we have put it into tabular form.<sup>1</sup>

Regarding that table we have two general remarks to make.

First, it may be noticed there is no mention of such prominent offences against Society as Murder, Adultery, Gambling, Forgery and the like, of which Dante gives so impressive an account. The reason of that is that we are here dealing not with the results of spiritual disease ; we are tracking these back to the morbid conditions out of which they spring. Thus Murder is a result of Hatred in its most fatal form. Adultery is a phenomenon of Lust. Gambling is Theft. Forgery is a complication arising from those three maladies, Falsehood, Theft and Avarice. We are dealing with diseases not with the outcome of disease in this table.

Our second remark is brought out by the reference we have just made to Forgery, namely, that of the Ramification of Sin. Sins are never found alone, and, as a rule, they are extremely complicated. We see this to some extent in physical maladies. Thus Scarlet Fever is often complicated by Bright's Disease ; Rheumatism has its sequela in Heart Trouble and so on. But in Spiritual Disease, the complications are infinitely more complex. This makes spiritual diagnosis a matter of great difficulty. One and

<sup>1</sup> P. 48.

the same vice may be developed from entirely different causes, thereby receiving a special character of its own and requiring a special treatment.

So much is this the case that Martensen believes a "complete catalogue of sins as from delimited diseases, impossible."<sup>1</sup> We do not believe this. The common sense of mankind distinguishes sins, when it calls one man "a drunkard" and the other "a thief." Nevertheless, it is well to remember also the unity of sin. It brings us back to its great root, "the lost sense of God," and reminds us of the comparative valuelessness of all symptomatic remedies in treating the maladies of the soul.

<sup>1</sup> Martensen's *Christian Ethics*, Eng. trans., p. 96.



## CHAPTER V

### DISEASES OF THE FLESH

**I**N the present chapter we give a necessarily brief account of the "diseases of the flesh." As we have seen, they may be grouped under four heads: Gluttony, Sloth, Intemperance and Sensuality. The first two need not delay us long. They are an example of the fact that Epidemics in one age may become through altered conditions less virulent in the next.

This is the case specially with *Gluttony*, the undisciplined appetite for food. In earlier ages, due perhaps to a more ascetic standard of morality, this vice was more gravely regarded. Dante classes it with drunkenness, and apparently rates it at a similar heinousness. In our own day, however, a wide divergence is seen both in the number of its victims and the ruin to which they lead. At the same time it is still a prevalent vice in every centre of wealth; and doctors tell us that a large proportion of the maladies of the well-to-do are due to it. One of the valuable results of the great war may be to put an end to this Epicurean ideal of "high living and plain thinking"; but such a cure can only be temporary in its effects. The only real antidote for it is the regnancy of the spirit over the flesh. Its essence lies in regarding eating as an end in itself instead of being a means to a higher end, and it is only when this higher end is kept in view that the body is kept under and its desires brought into subjection.

The most serious *sequelæ* of Gluttony are Sensuality and Spiritual indifference. Both of these are seen in the case of Esau, who is described as a "sensualist, who for

one mess of meat sold his own birthright.”<sup>1</sup> Hence the insistence on Fasting as a discipline of all spiritual fitness by every great spiritual athlete. Even One who was accused of being “a Gluttonous man,” declared that it was a necessary adjunct to spiritual mastery of the highest kind.<sup>2</sup> Fasting has now gone out of fashion in Protestant circles. It was not, however, always so. The “Fast Day” was an old institution in the Scottish Church, and it is interesting to see in Mrs. Hudson Taylor’s *Life of Pastor Hsi*—a Chinese Christian of the Protestant Missions there, and a man who largely found his own way in spiritual matters—that the value of Fasting as an aid to prayer is strongly emphasized. The modern Church has, no doubt, lost something by its desuetude.

Turning now to *Sloth*, or the incontinent desire for Sleep and Rest, much the same remarks may be made. The Bible takes a more severe view of its dangers than the modern mind. To the book of Proverbs the Sluggard is one of the most hopeless figures. His stupidity worse than a beast’s, his want in the winter of old age and his tendency to become spiritually as well as physically inert are painted in tragic colours. Christ in the Parable of the Talents<sup>3</sup> has similarly branded the wickedness of the Slothful man; and St. Paul has pointed out its spiritual relations with indifference in many passages.<sup>4</sup>

In the present age the public conscience has become less quick in regard to this sin. Socialism has replaced the old injunction—“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might”<sup>5</sup>—with the maxim, “Ca’ canny.” No doubt the hard conditions of modern labour have had something to do with this substitution; but as a whole it has had a lowering influence on the ideals of the British workman.

The cure of Sloth is like that of all these fleshy diseases, both symptomatic and radical. That is to say, we can very largely mitigate the manifestations of a sloth-

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xvii. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxv.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. v. 14 and others.

<sup>5</sup> Eccles. ix. 10.

ful temper by a regimen in youth of the habits of activity and punctuality. This is of great value, because the prognosis of this disease is much more hopeful in earlier years. When sloth has become a confirmed habit, its cure is a very hopeless business. The radical treatment, of course, lies in supplying a sufficient motive to the slothful man. You can see the value of this in the difference between the work which a man does for another and that which he does for himself. Such motives are those suggested by the rewards of activity in this life, such as Wealth, Power and Fame. They are so powerful to-day that among the better classes, at least, Sloth is not a common vice. Among the poor, however, where such rewards are not so easily won, the disease is still common. It is only the Spiritual motives that can be appealed to in the case of the poor man, such as our accountability to God, the shortness of life, and the Heavenly Reward. These are, indeed, the best counter-activities of the Slothful Temper in every class, and to them the Apostle Paul adds what to the Christian is the greatest spring of all activity, the impelling power of the Love of Christ.<sup>1</sup> The most active of all the graces is Love, and when the Love of Christ constrains, it does so to an intensity of soul in which Sloth becomes an impossibility. So one of the greatest of Christian workers was cured of a *dolce far niente* view of life. It was the vision of the Cross at Düsseldorf, in the picture seen by Count Zinzendorf there, that led a pleasure-living nobleman into a tireless and life-long service.

When we come to *Intemperance*, or the illegitimate use of Stimulants, we are in presence of a Spiritual disease which the modern Conscience is under no temptation to underrate. Its victims are so many, its ruin both to body and spirit so palpable, the sorrow and poverty it entails on those with whom these victims are connected so tragic, and the general weakening of the whole national character which it involves so serious that

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xii. 1, 11.



in our own country at least, where it has long been epidemic, it may well be regarded as the most formidable of all the "diseases of the flesh."

Intemperance is a generic name which covers two classes of spiritual diseases, the illegitimate use of nerve *stimulants* and the illegitimate use of nerve *sedatives*. There are many stimulants of the nerves, all of which may legitimately be used in moderation, but of these the most dangerous is that of alcohol; and it is this we usually mean when we speak of Intemperance. Alcoholism, however, is the more scientific term and is in itself a subject so vast that its psychological treatment would demand a volume to itself.<sup>1</sup>

Let us here note, in the first place, that it is caused by an illegitimate way of satisfying what is in itself a legitimate appetite, that of Nerve-Stimulus or Exhilaration. There are times when the body needs such a "pick-me-up"—times of fatigue, low health, depressed spirits; social hours when the claims of courtesy call for an increase of vitality; moments of strain when prolonged labour or great efforts are demanded. At such time stimulants such as Tea are freely allowed, and many would admit the value of alcohol at them as well. The danger of its use, however, is so great, that some of the soundest moralists have counselled a total abstinence from the companionship of a friend that is apt in the end to prove so false. Whatever view we take of this, we ought, however, always to remember that alcoholism is in its source as innocent as the desire for food or sleep. What the drunkard would say if his disease could speak is the oft-quoted lines of Tennyson:

" 'Tis life of which our nerves are scant,  
Life and not death for which we pant,  
More life and fuller—that we want."

Thus its only radical cure can be found in the substitution of a spiritual stimulus to satisfy the craving of

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Cutten has made an able answer to this demand in his *Psychology of Alcoholism*.

the body, which has become diseased. St. Paul is therefore a true Psychologist when he prescribes a baptism of the Holy Spirit as the best cure for alcoholism. "Be not drunken with wine . . . but be filled with the Spirit."<sup>1</sup> It is, however, not in opposition to this, but taken in harmony with it, to interpret this "counter-attraction" to the public-house in the widest sense. Better homes, healthy amusements, social institutes, a wider and richer life for the poor man generally—these must also be had recourse to, in order to work a radical cure of a disease which in its root is a craving for life.

As for the Symptomatic cure, we confess we have little faith in pledge-taking, except in regard to the young, where a habit may thus be formed which will prove a useful, though not always a reliable, barrier against temptation in later years. Pledge-taking in the old, unless it be accompanied by a deep religious change, is a mischievous practice, leading to the breaking of solemn vows, and thus doing violence to the spiritual nature.

The *Drug Cure for Alcoholism* is on a different footing, inasmuch as it proceeds on scientific principles and prescribes a prolonged change of life as a means of giving the moral nature a new start. It proceeds on the basis that alcoholism is largely a physical disease, and attempts to cure it by administering a subtle drug to the nerves which creates a nausea against liquor, and thus breaks off its habit. In this it is philosophically unsound; alcoholism is not a physical disease in its origin, though it may become so in its end. Hence such cures can only be temporary in their value. When the patient returns from his treatment and goes back to his old life, the former conditions and temptations are likely to reassert themselves and a relapse is in many cases the result.

At the same time the Drug Cure may have this valuable result, that it breaks off the habit for a time, and thus gives the patient a chance to start afresh, with a

<sup>1</sup> Eph. v. 18.

clean sheet, so to speak. Hence if it is used as a prophylactic to more spiritual remedies, it may be, and I believe often is, of real value.

I remember a case in my own experience where this was so. The drunkard had fallen under the spell of a noble affection, and determined for his lover's sake to break off the habit. Finding the physical craving too strong to conquer alone, he went to a "cure" and came back an outwardly reformed man. He then married, and so far as I know—and I knew him for many years afterwards—remained a sober man. In this case the cure was spiritual in so far as love is spiritual and it is of a proper kind. Whether there were other and more religious influences at work I never knew. He was not outwardly a religious man.

We have known of other cases of a similar kind, but perhaps the most interesting testimony to the use of drugs is found in Pastor Hsi's biography, already referred to. His fight was against opium; but what was true of the one may be as true of the other. Pastor Hsi took the "opium fiends" into his house and administered to them a treatment, partly of Faith and partly of drugs, scientifically supplied to him by English doctors. The result was the cure of hundreds of cases all over the district. In later days Hsi became tainted with Fanaticism, and his views developed into a creed not very different from Christian Science.

Dr. Cutten, in the work we have already referred to, takes a less favourable view of the Drug Cure. He quotes Dr. Starr<sup>1</sup> to the effect that the only reformed drunkards he knew were those who were saved by religion—not by medicine. He confirms his opinion by the findings of a special conference of the New York Academy of Medicine, convened to discuss cures for Alcoholism. At that conference Drug Cures were discountenanced, and the only remedies which found favour were Religion and, strange to say, Hypnotism. Our own experience is different, and

<sup>1</sup> *American Medical Record*, vol. lix. p. 432.



the growing number of "Homes for Inebriates" seems to prove it well founded.

We come now to the second form of Spiritual diseases connected with nerve-stimulus, what is known as the *Drug Habit*: Opium, Morphia, Chloral, Cocaine and the like. In this case the object usually sought is not only exhilaration, but of a sedative order. The habit may be carelessly contracted, through the desire to seek relief from pain of an excruciating and recurrent character. The classic case is that of De Quincey falling into the Opium habit in his search after relief from prolonged toothache. More often, however, the vice is due to neurasthenia owing to over-strain, either in the race for pleasure or wealth, or even some more laudable object of ambition. The patient falls into a state of nervous depression. His condition becomes one of growing anxiety. Sleep forsakes him. Fear stands in the way. Work becomes an impossibility; the "grasshopper becomes a burden." At last life seems to end in a blank wall. At one time he longs for death, at another, like Tolstoi, he removes every instrument of death from his room, lest in a moment of distraction he should take away his life.

The disease is very old. Its symptoms are accurately described in many of the Psalms, notably the 31st, 88th and 116th. In these we have depicted in striking modernity, its emaciation,<sup>1</sup> its unnatural dread of death<sup>2</sup> and longing to be away from it all,<sup>3</sup> its obsessions of suspicion, so that at times the sufferer counts all men untrue,<sup>4</sup> worst of all, the eclipse of faith, so that God's presence is blotted out from the sufferer's soul.<sup>5</sup> In these ancient records of neurotic disease we have no absolute Atheism. Heman the Ezrahite<sup>6</sup> betrays no scepticism in the reality of God. He only complains of His callous disregard of his sufferings.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxxi. 9-11.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. lv. 6-8.

<sup>5</sup> Ps. lxxxviii.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lxxxviii. 3-5.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. cxvi. 11, 12.

<sup>6</sup> Ps. lxxxviii. 6-8.

Like Carlyle, he says: "There is a God—but He does nothing!"<sup>1</sup>

In modern life this faith is not so often seen, and it is the absence of it that usually drives its victims into illegitimate paths in order to get a temporary cessation of their sufferings. Thus in *John Chilcote, M.P.*, Mrs. Thurston's powerful romance descriptive of a victim of the Morphine habit, the patient is conceived as a wholly irreligious man.

On the other hand, we have known its victims to be more religious than at other times. The success of Christian Science with many of these cases is a proof of this. Probably the great majority of those who have been helped by this new "faith" have been victims to some form of neurasthenia. The widespread character of the malady, due to the rush of modern life, has hardly, we think, been fully realized; nor has its treatment been always the wisest. Too much regard has been paid to physical remedies, too little to the healing of Faith. Hence the opportunity of Christian Science. Neurasthenia is one of those diseases which are on the borderland between the realm of the body and that of the spirit. Its treatment to be wise must therefore combine both; and the use of drugs to obtain sleep is in our experience of this malady—and it is large—a most dangerous one. We have known not a few who have gone to a terrible death at the end of years of mental suffering, because they had recourse to sedatives injudiciously prescribed by their physician.

On the other hand, we have known none whose cases turned out unfavourably, if they trusted in such times to "the arm of faith." On the contrary, we have had cases of several who have owed to it not merely a physical recovery, but a spiritual reinvigoration of faith as well. One case was that of a woman who was an overwrought teacher in a large public school. Suffering terribly from insomnia, she had gone to her medical adviser, who advised

<sup>1</sup> Froude's *Biography*.

her to "work out her own salvation" by a courageous refusal to give in. Forsaking him, however, she went to a younger doctor, who gave her a prescription of chloral mixed with some other drugs. She was rapidly becoming a slave to the habit, when she happened to mention the matter to her minister. Knowing the terrible results which had followed the use of this drug in similar cases, he reasoned with her for a whole hour, and at length got her to vow solemnly before God that she would never touch it again. She had a hard fight, but eventually by earnest prayer gained her liberty. The experience made her an earnest Christian, and she was for many years one of the best workers in the church, with a very large class of factory girls under her charge. We could give many more examples if space permitted. Unfortunately, most ministers are not experienced in this trouble, and, besides, there is less and less tendency to go to the minister now for help in such cases. We strongly believe that an Institution such as that described by Drs. Worcester and M'Comb in the *Emmanuel Church Movement* in Boston, U.S.A.,<sup>1</sup> would, if wisely guided, be of real service in such cases. We regret to see that the Church of England has pronounced against this interesting movement.<sup>2</sup> It has, of course, its dangers, and would need to be wisely guided by Christian doctors as well as ministers; but if so, we believe it would be a real service to the community and a true antidote to the extravagances of "Christian Science."

The last of the Fleshly Diseases is that which is known in the New Testament as *Licentiousness, Lasciviousness* or *Fornication*—the *incontinent use of the Sexual Function*. This Function, which has its legitimate use as the custodian of the continuity of the race, needs to be kept under careful control, and nature has surrounded its abuse with heavy penalties. Little need be said here as to the physical results of incontinence, as

<sup>1</sup> *Religion and Medicine*, by the Rev. Drs. Worcester and M'Comb.

<sup>2</sup> Report of Church Congress on *Emmanuel Church Movement*.



the subject belongs more to the realm of medical science. In the present war the gigantic ramifications of such diseases as Syphilis, Gonorrhœa, etc., have occasioned a National Commission to deal with their prevention. The Christian Church has too long looked with suspicion on all such legislation as a legalizing of vice instead of preventing it. There need, however, be no such error in a wise legislation. When the disease is known to infect the innocent as well as the guilty, it becomes the duty of the State to step in and prevent its ravages, just as it would do any other infectious disorder.

The spiritual effects of fornication are no less terrible. As Burns says, "it petrifies the feelings," hardening and coarsening the whole nature so that the spiritual faculties become altogether cauterized and dead. An attempt has been made to make a distinction between the sexes in this degradation. Some have said it is more hurtful to the female nature than the male. Thus Tacitus declares that "when a woman's chastity is gone she is fit for anything." This is the principle of Society in its attitude to the unpardonable sin. Some, again, would hold, with Dr. Horton, that "a woman is not, like a man, inevitably corrupted by sexual immorality. Fallen she may be, and yet in the heart and centre of her she may remain, if not pure, at least kind and unselfish and open to the sweet influences of religion." We do not share either of these views. Souls are sexless, and the amount of degradation which this sin entails, depends on other considerations—temperament, its complication with other spiritual maladies and social environment. While there are women from whose nature a life of immorality fails to eradicate tender feelings and much spiritual longing, we have to remember that, as Richardson has powerfully depicted the Procuress in *Pamela*, there are many women whom such a life literally demonizes.

Reference has been made in the previous chapter to the tenderness with which Christ deals with sinners of this type. "The publicans and the harlots go into the

kingdom of heaven before you.”<sup>1</sup> It is true that Jesus thought hypocrisy a more hopeless disorder than sexual vice. He did so because the latter sin was outward, beforehand going to judgment. The sense of guilt is more quick. “The publican and the harlot have fewer illusions; they were left little chance of imagining their lives to be right before God.”<sup>2</sup>

This, however, does not mean that He was morally indifferent to it. On the contrary, there was no virtue of which He took a more exacting view than Sexual Purity. His attitude to marriage is so high that the human race have stumbled vainly in an attempt to reach it. He regarded the evil eye of lust as equal in sin to the evil act which follows, and declared that blindness and mutilation were better than the possession of such a tendency.<sup>3</sup> So high is the view He took and the attitude to the social evil which the Church adopted under His influence, that the purity of its womanhood became in the earlier ages one of its distinctive marks. “Chastity,” says Renan, “is a Christian, not a natural virtue.”

There are two forms of this disease, the Individual and Social. Individual impurity is the earlier. The patient, led on by a false curiosity and debased by impure books and conversation, but shrinking as yet from Fornication, finds relief in secret and unnatural forms of self-indulgence. The vice is said to be common in boarding-schools, and most ministers of large city churches come in contact with it in young men, who, overwhelmed with shame, confess to being slaves to this disgusting sin.

Two lines of treatment have been indicated. One is that of Fear. The terrors of Insanity have been invoked as a motive for breaking off the habit. We question if this be a wise method. To begin with, it is not true. The cases of insanity due to this sin are very few indeed, and not to be compared to that of alcoholism. In the second place, it usually terrifies the patient into the grosser forms

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxi. 31.

<sup>2</sup> T. R. Glover, *The Jesus of History*, p. 166.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. v. 28, quoted by Glover, p. 162.

of Fornication, and this has been even advised by quacks and low-class medical men. This is truly diabolical advice, and many a life has been destroyed by yielding to it. Far better to struggle on as he is, than that he should involve another life as well.

The second method of treatment is that of Idealism and high resolve. Filthy books, pictures and companions should be resolutely shunned. Pure society should be advised, since solitude is a favourable condition for this sin. Athletics should be practised, in order to carry off the surplus energy. Above all, he should give himself fully and unreservedly to God, directing his energies into sober, self-denying activities; for, as George Eliot says, "All Passion becomes strength when it is changed into the work of the right hand or the still creative energy of thought."<sup>1</sup>

When Impurity has passed from the Individual to the Social form its treatment becomes more difficult. That much can be done even with the most degraded types is, however, proved by the experience of the Church in all ages since Christ raised the Magdalene. The case of Colonel Gardiner is a striking example of a man being saved in mid-life from this sin. In the records of the Salvation Army and all Evangelistic Societies there are multitudes. In *Broken Earthenware*, Mr. Harold Begbie, tells of a woman of the streets who was saved by the gift of a "white flower." Its snowy purity awakened chords in her heart and led her after a severe struggle into a life of virtue.

The Complications of this sin, which render its progress less hopeful, are Drunkenness, Adultery in which it is combined with Falsehood to another man or woman, and malignant hatred of all virtue in which it becomes impregnated with the envy of all purity. When this stage is reached it develops into that last hopeless condition of utter diabolism in which the love of either God or man is blotted out from the soul.

<sup>1</sup> *Adam Bede*,



A question may be asked in closing—Ought parents to be more frank with their children on this subject? This is a difficult question to answer. The Roman Catholic Church affords its priests an opportunity for straight speaking in the Confessional. We have no such institution in the Protestant, and few would desire it, especially in the hands of an unmarried man. Nevertheless, we cannot but think that a manual prepared by a Christian doctor might be authorized by the Church to be put into the hands of our young people on the entrance to the years of puberty. It is no doubt true that not a few are betrayed into this sin in its earlier stages by ignorance and false curiosity.

## CHAPTER VI

### DISEASES OF THE HEART

WE now come to the second and perhaps the most prolific class of spiritual maladies, the diseases of the affections, what St. Paul calls the diseases of the Soul or Natural Man. As the Heart is regarded to-day as the seat of the affections, perhaps a more expressive word to-day would simply be diseases of the Heart. So our Lord uses it, though He extends the word to include diseases of the Flesh as well.<sup>1</sup>

They are divisible into two sub-classes—those due to an inordinate love for self, and those associated with a sub-normal love for others. In the former are the great passions of Ambition, Pride and Avarice; in the latter are the sins of temper—such as unrighteous Anger, Sullenness, Cruelty, Envy and Jealousy.

Of course, these two conditions may, and often do, coexist. Indeed, Self-love is at the root of both. Nevertheless, in their manifestation a distinction may be drawn between the two. The first are Cardiac Enlargements. The second are Cardiac Atrophies—"the stony heart."

We begin with Ambition, or the illegitimate love of Power. Of course, there is an Ambition which is just. The word only occurs three times in the New Testament, and, curiously, always in a good sense. In one of these it is associated with our work. "Study," literally, "Be ambitious to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands."<sup>2</sup> The second reference has to

<sup>1</sup> Mark vii. 21, 22.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 11.

do with the preaching of the gospel: "Making it my aim," literally, my ambition, "so to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build on another man's foundation."<sup>1</sup> The third is the ambition to have a good conscience: "Wherefore, also, we make it our aim," literally, our ambition, "whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto Him,"<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* God. These cases of true ambition suggest what is its morbid condition—self-love. The ambition to make our work the best we can do is one of the noblest of desires; but it may be followed simply for selfish fame or money; and in so far as it is so, it detracts both from the worker and his work. The ambition to influence men is a high object, if in all things a desire to influence them for good is kept to the front; but if it is sought only to minister to selfish glory, it becomes one of the greatest curses of the human race. Even the ambition to be holy may be tainted by self; as in the selfish seclusion of the monastic life, or in the desire for pre-eminence in the Church.

Ambition is the most exacting of all human passions. Strong as love is, it has been conquered by an ambition which has taken complete possession of the heart; Napoleon, the great modern example of ambition, did not hesitate to sacrifice the Empress Josephine on its altar. None has caused more widespread misery. It is the maker of war, the desolator of homes, the widow's and orphan's curse. Take Ambition out of history and you would have to re-write it, and the book would be a happier if less romantic story.

Yet there are many who think it no sin. The gospel of "getting on" is preached even from Christian pulpits as if it were the chief end of a young man. A famous Nonconformist preacher once published a book entitled *Making the best of Both Worlds*.<sup>3</sup> This is surely to fall below the ideal of Christ. In His last-acted parable, the Washing of the Disciples' Feet, He laid it down that life's highest ambition was not to be the service of self, but that

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xv. 20.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. v. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Binney.



of others. We do not, of course, say that the desire to do well in life is not a worthy one, but it should always be qualified by the higher ideal, to use our talents in the service of God and Humanity.

It may be questioned whether the spirit of emulation, so much fostered in School and College life, is altogether healthy in this respect. We do not say that prizes are in themselves an evil, but the end they are to serve should always be kept before the competitor's mind; not glory, but knowledge; and knowledge not for our sake, but for that of others. The motto on the prizes of one of our great public schools used to be the Pagan sentiment of Hector of Troy:

*Αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων.*<sup>1</sup>

Better is the legend on one of the gates of Harvard University:

“Enter to grow in wisdom.

Depart to serve better thy country and thy kind.”

If Ambition is chiefly a vice of the male temperament, *Vanity and Pride*, the next of these diseases of the affections, is one of the female. This is not due to any sex-distinction, but to environment. The sphere of man's activity gives free play to ambition. The life of woman, being narrower, concentrates on Admiration. A woman can best conquer the world by being admired by the stronger sex; which, moreover, her natural gift of beauty fits her to be.

There is a love of admiration which is innocent and even laudable. It is the love of being able to attract the soul to the noble and the beautiful. There can be no Love where there is not first admiration. The love to be loved is not a wrong feeling. What spoils it, as in the case of ambition, is an unworthy motive. If our desire for admiration leads us on to love pure and unselfish, it is one of the ministers of God. If, on the other hand, we have only a selfish love of being admired for our

<sup>1</sup> “Always to excel and to be above the others,” *Iliad*, vi.

own sake, it becomes a base and heartless vice of vanity.

The love of admiration begins very early. You can see it in the child's artless remark, "Look at me," when it is doing anything it thinks fine. Innocent and amusing as it is there, it may grow into one of the most baleful diseases of the heart, killing in it all that is unselfish and predisposing its possessor to the most heartless disregard for the sufferings of others. The passion for display, the eager desire for fine clothes and great houses, the costly entertainments and expensive amusements of the rich, which are at the root of so much Mammon-worship to-day, are all due to Vanity and Pride. When Christian passed through Vanity Fair long ago, he saw among its objects of merchandise "souls of men." He would probably see no less large a stock of the same commodity to-day with, as Hawthorne suggests, a number of church members on duty to carry on the sales.<sup>1</sup>

The third form of Self-love is *Avarice* or *the passion for wealth*. It may be a sequela of Vanity, but in its worst form it is pursued for its own sake. It is, if not the strongest, the basest of all the diseases of the Affections. Unlike most passions which die down in old age, it grows with the years, so that it may be called the besetting sin of old age. The most powerful painters of the Miser's curse are the great French writers. Balzac and Molière have each drawn in their own way inimitable pictures of the heartlessness and sordidness which it reaches in its later stages. In *L'Avare* especially we have the description of a soul so petrified by its power as to be nothing but a cold wedge of gold. The darkest crime in history had its root in avarice, if not its whole explanation there.

It is noticeable that the danger of the love of money was one of Christ's most frequent warnings. Mr. Ruskin points out that while the evil of having too much wealth is seldom treated in the modern pulpit, there is no word more frequent on the lips of Jesus. In the Sermon on

<sup>1</sup> "The Celestial Railroad," *Mosses from an Old Manse*.

the Mount, the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Rich Fool and the incident of the Young Man with great Possessions, He treated the sin of Avarice with His accustomed courage. No doubt this is partly due to the fact that covetousness was endemic in Judaism. It was a national sin, just as drunkenness is with us. Still the fact remains, that to Jesus the diseases of the Heart were more deadly than the diseases of the Flesh.

As to the treatment of these three forms of Spiritual heart disease, we note that Christ's method was twofold. First He tried to show men the insufficiency of the rewards of the selfish life. This is His method in His parables of the Rich Fool and the Rich Man and Lazarus. Then further He revealed to them the more permanent and glorious rewards of the Kingdom of God. This is taught by Him in many passages, notably the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>1</sup> But perhaps more powerful than either in lifting the affections to higher things was the vision of Himself, in the moral beauty of His self-sacrificing life and most of all in the Glory of His Cross. By this means He converted from Avarice such a man as Matthew the Publican and from a life of Vanity such a woman as Mary Magdalene. But the most remarkable cure of all in this connection was that of St. Paul, who was saved from a life of selfish Ambition to one of complete self-surrender by the vision of the Cross. "Far be it for me to glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me."<sup>2</sup>

This indeed is the only hopeful treatment of these diseases of the Heart. The heart being affected by them, the only cure can be *from the heart*. In *Silas Marner*, George Eliot gives a good example of Christ's twofold method of dealing with the Miser's Soul. Disillusion with earthly riches is accompanied by a higher attraction. The loss of the Miser's gold is accompanied by the substitution of the child's golden curls. The famished heart is filled with a new and nobler love.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi. 19-21.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. vi. 14.



Such transformations are by no means uncommon. The moral beauty of St. Francis' life, leaving earthly all and going forth joyously with Poverty as his bride to follow Christ, has found many admirers. We see a modern one in F. W. Crossley, the rich engineer of Manchester, going to live in the slums of Manchester in order to save his fellows. It must, however, be admitted that such revolutions are largely confined to early years. In later life they grow more and more infrequent, and in old age the Prognosis of these maladies, especially that of Avarice, is very hopeless.

The extreme forms of Socialism hope to cure these evils by creating an environment in which their motives will be destroyed. In a Communism in which all property is regarded as theft they see the only panacea for such selfish cravings. Experience shows that these Utopias are hopeless dreams. These affections are, in fact, part of our human nature. To cut them out would be to cut out the heart of humanity. Affection and property are correlative terms. You cannot destroy the one without killing the other. If such a state as Plato's Republic could be reached it would only end in an apathy of soul in which all ambition being dead, all activity, except that of the few enthusiasts who lead the Movement, would die too. The true cure for these diseases of the affections is not the excision of the faculties from which they spring, but the elevation of them to a higher level—"the setting of the affections on the things above, not on those beneath."<sup>1</sup>

Turning now from those maladies connected with an exaggerated Self-love to those which manifest themselves in a minimized love for others, we come first of all to *Untruthfulness*, or the denial to our Neighbour of the truth we owe him. Falsehood is one of those vices it is difficult to class. In its root, it is rather a disease of the religious faculty, inasmuch as it springs from a lack of reverence for the God of truth. Practically, however, its root is anti-social—a desire to overreach one's neighbour,

<sup>1</sup> Col. iii. 2.

due either to avarice or fear, or some other malevolent motive.

It has two forms—untruthfulness of word, or Falsehood, and untruthfulness of deed, or Dishonesty. Of these the former is usually regarded as the less heinous. It seems almost venial to tell a lie under certain conditions. Nevertheless, the greatest teachers of youth have always laid the most solemn emphasis on it as the foundation of character.<sup>1</sup> All moral decadence, in fact, begins in the loss of reverence for truth.

With Dishonesty, or Untruthfulness in Deed, the standard of judgment is very different. On Honesty depends the very framework of social life, and hence Theft has in all civilized codes been regarded as a most grave offence. In spite of this, however, the apparent advantages it offers are so attractive to Avarice that there is no social disease more common. From the vulgar pickpocket up to the refined swindler, it accounts for full 50 per cent. of the crimes in every calendar.

The commonest cause of Dishonesty is, as we have said, Avarice, though Ambition and Pride may indirectly lead to it also. Its deepest root, however, is like that of Untruthfulness, a deficiency of reverence for that God who loves truth "in the inward parts,"<sup>2</sup> and a failure to perceive that in the long run we cannot prosper by pursuing any line of action that is in antagonism to Him. If it needs courage to be true, it needs fear to be courageous—that fear of God which is the beginning of courage. Hence the true cure for Dishonesty, whether of word or deed, is to be found by teaching the youthful mind that nothing can be so great a gain as God's favour, no loss to compensate for His displeasure. In the best sense, "Honesty is the best policy," because without it the heart is shut out of that peace and joy which the favour of God alone can give. The true cure of dishonesty must in a word be radical, not symptomatic. The fear of the lash may deter the thief from his roguery, but

<sup>1</sup> So Dr. Arnold, *vide Life*, ch. iii.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. li.

nothing but the fear of the Lord can make him an honest man.

The next disease of "the stony heart" is that of *Anger* or *Malevolent Passion*. The natural condition of the heart as designed by its Creator is one of love. Man is a gregarious animal. His truest happiness, therefore, as well as his highest development, lies in a condition of friendship with his neighbours. When, therefore, owing to some irritating cause this natural affection is changed into one of anger, the heart comes into an abnormal condition. In a word, it is diseased in its *temper*, and is no longer subject to the control of the higher powers. The diseases of the Temper assume many forms.

The first is the *Violent or Irritable* temper. The direct cause of this affection is some often trivial irritation against which its victim explodes in furious gusts of passion, often accompanied by bad language and even acts of violence against the person. Its real root, however, is a lack of control in the inhibitory centres. Hence its frequency in childhood. It is one of the earliest manifestations of sin. Thus, too, its commonness in certain forms of Alcoholism, this stimulant being a notorious paralysing agent of the inhibitory centres. Under wise training the child's instability of temper passes off; but where this training is absent, and temperament or an environment of wealth favours its growth, it develops into an ingrained irritability which makes its possessor a bane to all who come near him. Yet he may be otherwise a warm-hearted man, and his gusts of passion may be followed by remorse and contrition, which, however, work no real cure, and in old age grow to such frequency and extent that his death becomes a welcome relief.

Another and even more sinister form of bad temper is the *sullen or vindictive spirit*. In this case there may be no explosion of anger; but the victim of it nourishes a grudge against all who offend him, nursing his wrath till he has obtained his revenge. It is one of the most unmistakable symptoms of "the stony heart." Christ wages



an uncompromising war against it in His parable of "the Unforgiving Debtor," and makes the Divine forgiveness conditional on its repudiation. His Law of Forgiveness is indeed, as Professor Seeley<sup>1</sup> has remarked, the most exacting of all His ethical postulates; and when one of His disciples asked Him how often he should forgive an offending brother—"Till seven times?"—He replied, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."<sup>2</sup>

The last and worst form of the malevolent temper is *Inhumanity or Cruelty*—the love of inflicting pain for its own sake. Macaulay has well described it as "the most odious vice incident to humanity, a delight in misery merely as misery." One of its most striking examples was the man of whom these words were written, Judge Jeffreys, the infamous judge of James the Second. It was affirmed, however, not without reason, to be a feature of the King's own character, especially in his later years. Macaulay gives a striking illustration of his implacable spirit in his famous interview with his nephew, the hapless Duke of Monmouth. "The King cannot be blamed for determining that Monmouth should suffer death. . . . But to see him and not to spare him was an outrage on humanity and decency. This outrage the King was resolved to commit. The arms of the prisoner were bound by a silken cord, and, thus secured, he was ushered into the presence of the implacable kinsman whom he had wronged. Then Monmouth threw himself on the ground and crawled to the King's feet. He wept. He tried to embrace his uncle's knees with his pinioned arms. He begged for life, only life, at any price. . . . James turned away in silence."<sup>3</sup>

The treatment of these diseases of the affections is, as might be expected from their seat, one of the most extreme difficulty. That of the first and mildest form of it, the choleric temper, yields most readily to symptomatic cure if taken in time. The discipline of fear is the most hopeful

<sup>1</sup> *Ecce Homo*, ch. xxii.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xviii. 21, 22.

<sup>3</sup> *History of England from the Accession of James II.*, ch. v.

of all remedies, then. We can see that in the change produced in a petted child when transplanted to a public school, where ill-temper is regarded as a thing that does not pay. The same result is produced by a soldier's discipline. Such remedies, however, are only superficial in their results. They cure the tendency to uncontrolled bursts of anger, but they do not fill the heart with the gentle and loving spirit which is the only true cure of the bitter temper. This can only be attained by a revolution of the whole spirit, through the soul's recognition of the forgiving love of God as it is revealed in Christ. Such a recognition not only fills the soul with a sense of the incongruity of being so greatly forgiven, and yet being unable to forgive our own small debts,<sup>1</sup> but it fills the heart with such a joy that forgiveness becomes easy. For as there is a psychological nexus between sadness and sullenness, so joy is expansive and fills its possessor with a sense of benignity to all mankind.

Professor James gives an illustration of the cure of this explosive temper in the case of Richard Weaver, a pugilistic collier, who after conversion became a much-loved Evangelist.

A day or two after this experience he went down the mine, "and found the boy crying because a fellow-workman was trying to take the wagon from him. I said to him :

" 'Tom, you mustn't take that wagon.'

" He swore at me and called me a Methodist devil. I told him that God did not tell me to let him rob me. He cursed again and said he would push the wagon over me. 'Well,' I said, 'let us see whether the Devil and thee are stronger than the Lord and me.' And the Lord and I proving the stronger, he had to get out of the way. So I gave the wagon to the boy.

" Then said Tom, 'I've a good mind to smack thee on the face.' 'Well,' I said, 'if that will do thee any good, thou canst do it.' So he struck me on the face. I turned the other cheek and said, 'Strike again.' He struck

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 32 ; 1 John iv. 20.

again and again, till he had struck me five times. I turned my cheek for the sixth time, but he turned away cursing.

"This was on a Saturday; and when I went home my wife saw my face was swollen and asked what was the matter. I said, 'I've been fighting, and given a man a good thrashing.' And so he had, for on the Monday his enemy burst into tears when he saw him and said, 'Richard, will you forgive me for striking you?'"<sup>1</sup>

Such cures of the choleric temper are not infrequent, but with the sullen and the cruel the prognosis is much less hopeful. The case of the Inplacable Saul of Tarsus converted by the vision of the Cross into the author of 1 Cor. xiii. proves that they are by no means hopeless.

We now turn to the kindred passions of *Envy* and *Jealousy* as the origins of the worst forms of the Cruel and Malevolent Temper. Closely related as these two passions are in the similarity of their manifestations, they are in root widely different. Envy is the child of hate: jealousy is the offspring of love. Envy is a sense of bitterness over what is not our own: jealousy is a feeling of wrong at being deprived of what we believe rightly or wrongly to be our own. Envy is thus a much meaner feeling than jealousy. In fact, there is nothing noble in it at all. It is a disease that can only breed in a low and depraved soul, and is a mark of advanced spiritual deterioration. It has been described as anger without a cause, since it has no just cause of resentment to point to, and is called forth by sheer malignant covetousness of the prosperity or superiority of other men.

It is frequently referred to in Scripture. Tradition ascribes to it the first Murder. It was the cause of the cruelty of Joseph's brethren. It inspires some of the bitterest sufferings portrayed in the Psalms. It culminates in the Cross. "They hated Me," says Jesus, "without a

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Jas. Paterson's *Life of Richard Weaver*, pp. 66-68: abridged by James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 281.



cause.”<sup>1</sup> A cause, of course, there was. Motiveless malignity is not to be found in any man (there is always “a soul of goodness” in things evil); but it was no sufficient cause. It was only a cause to their own evil heart. “He knew that for Envy they had delivered Him.”<sup>2</sup>

In secular literature its most striking personation is Shakespeare’s creation of Iago; the most sinister figure, perhaps, in all his gallery. So dark are the features of his countenance, that some have seen in it an attempt to portray evil in its pure unadulterated malignity. “In Iago,” says Coleridge, “we see Shakespeare’s creation of motiveless malignity.” This, as we have seen, is a mistake. The only motiveless man is a madman. The root of Iago’s conduct is to be found in envy of Othello’s good. He envies him the happiness of a love of one so sweet and beautiful as Desdemona. He envies the prosperity of his fortunes, rising in spite of his black skin to be one of the most honoured men in the State. Above all, he envies the nobility of character which makes Othello in a sense worthy of all he gets:

“He hath a daily beauty in his life  
That makes me ugly.”<sup>3</sup>

There may, as Professor Bradley points out, be other forces working in the machinery of his complex nature. “To plume up” the will, to heighten the sense of power or superiority, this seems to be the unconscious motive of many acts of cruelty which do not spring chiefly from ill-will, and which, therefore, puzzle and sometimes horrify us most. So is it with Iago. His thwarted sense of superiority wants satisfaction. What fuller satisfaction could there be than that he be master of a General who has undervalued him, and of a rival that has been preferred to him; that these worthy people who are so successful be but puppets in his hand—but living puppets which at the motion of his finger must contort themselves in agony? This granted, a most abnormal deadness of human feeling

<sup>1</sup> John xv. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvii. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Act v. Sc. i.

is perfectly intelligible.<sup>1</sup> All this may be true ; but who does not see that the root of it all is envy ? The desire for superiority comes from “the torture of inferiority,” which is the very nerve of envy.

Turning from Envy to its kindred malady, that of *Jealousy*, we at once feel in the presence of a nobler passion. This is well brought out in the same tragedy as that which reveals the envy of Iago. In Othello’s suspicions we see all the agony of this disease of the soul, its unworthy thoughts, its blinded misconstruction of the purest things, its obsession, working like madness in the brain, and at last its wild volcanic wrath, ruthless in its fury. Yet, on the other hand, we see also the nobleness of the nature which it attacks—the great love behind it, the selfishness of its abnegation, and, finally, the condition, amounting to despair, to which it leads when its unworthy suspicions are discovered to be unworthy :

“Speak of me as I am ; nothing extenuate,  
Nor set down aught in malice, then must you speak  
Of one that lov’d not wisely but too well ;  
Of one, not easily jealous, but, being wrought,  
Perplexed in the extreme ; of one, whose hand,  
Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away,  
Richer than all his tribe.”<sup>2</sup>

The nobility and open justice of jealousy have led the prophets of the Old Testament to ascribe this passion to God. “I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.”<sup>3</sup> In Hosea the figure is pushed beyond the verge of Anthropomorphism under the form of an outraged husband and unfaithful wife. Can this be justified under New Testament conceptions ? A modern writer thinks it can. He points out from the case of Othello what are the vices of the jealous temper : its ignorance, infatuation, unworthy suspicions, and above all its wild and merciless wrath.<sup>4</sup> In the jealousy of God, again, all these errors are excluded.

<sup>1</sup> *Shakespearian Tragedy*, A. C. Bradley, p. 222—compressed.

<sup>2</sup> Act v. Sc. ii.

<sup>3</sup> Ex. xx. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. T. G. Selby, *The Lesson of a Dilemma*, p. 102.

Perfect knowledge combines with a perfect love, in which there is no despotic fury, but only the pain of a wounded love. When thus freed from imperfection, it is, he says, only "love on its darkened and shadowed and suffering underside."

It may be so, but we must confess we have the feeling that there is always something imperfect in a love that has room for jealousy in it. Perfect love casts out this fear, scorns the thought of it as an insult. And therefore we much prefer the conception of the Divine love given in the New Testament, that of a father for a child, to the conjugal one of the Old. In such a love, jealousy has no place. It is all a giving; and while it may be wounded and pained by its rejection, it is moved rather to sorrow than to anger.

What has been remarked of the other diseases of the temper is still more true of the great passions of Envy and Jealousy. They are heart affections, and can only be cured from within. The author of the 73rd Psalm suggests the true cure for envy when he points to the need of getting into a higher and nobler atmosphere of thought and feeling. "I was envious," he says at the arrogant, "when I saw the prosperity of the wicked; for there are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm."<sup>1</sup> As he thought how easy life seemed to go with them, while he was plagued "all the day long," envy developed into doubt, and his feet were almost gone from their standing ground in faith. "Until," he continues, "I went into the sanctuary of God." There in the quiet and solemn beauty of the Temple he saw that the only wealth worth coveting is that which no man need envy, since it is free to all—the wealth of character and eternal life, the wealth of spiritual health.

This is the cure, and the only cure, for these passions. It is to realize that the best gifts can never be taken from us, since they are the gifts of God. What may seem to

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxiii. 3, 4.



be taken from us is not really so, if we have God. To have Him is to have all things; and to have the assurance of that, is to have a secret of contentment which neither envy nor jealousy can take away.

In closing this section of spiritual malady, we may point out that the culminating point of all these distempers is murder, or the taking of human life under the influence of malevolent passion. A capital crime in any criminal code, it is not one that need delay us long in a discussion of sin from the point of view of disease. For murder cannot be regarded as a disease. It is only a phenomenon accompanying the disease of unbridled wrath. No doubt there is a homicidal mania, but this is not murder. It is a form of insanity rather than an ethical condition. Murder, then, is a culmination of wrath, and the question of responsibility must be determined on the conditions that have led up to it. If it come as the sequel of choleric and unpremeditated passion, its seriousness is much less grave than if it spring from the deeper centres of Avarice, Revenge, Envy and Jealousy. The guilt of murder is to be estimated by the gravity of the disease from which it springs, and its punishment should be regulated by the question as to the effect it is likely to have on that disease. The old crude law, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed,"<sup>1</sup> must be superseded by the more spiritual and scientific law of the New Testament, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gen. ix. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iii. 15.

## CHAPTER VII

### DISEASES OF THE SPIRIT

THE disorders of the spiritual side of human nature are not usually regarded with so serious an eye as those of the other two classes we have been considering. This is, no doubt, due to the fact that the latter are more apt to have outward and social consequences than the former. Sins of the Flesh and the Heart destroy a man's body or injure the framework of society, and therefore to a large extent come under the class of crimes which no legislator can afford to ignore. Sins of the Spirit are more inward and personal in their results. Moreover, "force is no remedy" with the most, and therefore a spirit of toleration has grown up in regard to them which in itself a good thing may more often degenerate into mere indifference.

For, our examination of man's moral diseases has surely shown that their cure must in most cases be radical, not superficial. It must, so to say, begin with the *Spirit*. Hence St. Paul, in the prayer to which we have already referred, mentions this first as the object of his petition, "I pray God that your whole Spirit and Soul and Body may be preserved blameless." We would naturally say, "Body, Soul and Spirit"; but he reverses the order designedly, teaching us that soul-health can only begin "with the Spirit"; that if it be diseased, the malady will spread into all the lower centres of man's nature. In dealing, therefore, with the pathology of this faculty we are at the roots of things. It is from these that all the rest spring. When these are wrong, all will

be more or less wrong. When these are right, all will come right.

Now the great religious faculty is Faith. It is the channel by which the divine life passes into the soul. Spiritual diseases all attack this supreme faculty, and may be grouped in reference to it. They are:

- (1) *Doubt*, or the *deficiency of Faith*;
- (2) *Superstition*, or the *misdirection of Faith*;
- (3) *Hypocrisy*, or *insincerity of Faith*;
- (4) *Irreverence*, or the *contempt of Faith*.

1. We begin with *Doubt*, in which the channel of faith is so clogged up or altogether closed, that scepticism, reaching in extreme forms to absolute Atheism, is the result.

It has sometimes been asked, "Is doubt a sin?" Tennyson, in his well-known lines, seems to answer, that so far from an "honest doubt" being a sin, it is really a virtue. Our attitude, however, to this question must depend largely on the period of life in which doubt is found, and the spirit with which it is accompanied. If the subject of it is young, readjusting his beliefs before arriving at a higher truth, the poet is right. Doubt cannot be regarded as a sin. It is only a movement in the evolution of faith. It is part of "the growing pains of the soul," a trying but not serious disease. So the doubt of Gideon seems to have been regarded by the Angel of Jehovah as the secret of that "might" in which he was to go and save Israel.<sup>1</sup>

If, on the other hand, the doubt be static—that is, if it has reached a permanent attitude to God and His revelation in history and providence, it is certainly a sin for it is a disease of the soul, and that of a most far-reaching kind. Its moral heinousness will, no doubt, depend on the amount of responsibility attaching to it; but unless we affirm that the Creator has made some men without a religious faculty at all, we must hold that there is always some accountability in man for his beliefs.

<sup>1</sup> Judg. vi. 14.



Doubt is a condition of spiritual disease. Carlyle put that long ago when he said, "Ages of reflection are ages of weakness. Strong ages are those of faith."<sup>1</sup> In religion, he says, "as the life centre of all, lay the true health and oneness. Only at a later era must religion split itself into Philosophies and thereby, the vital union of thought being lost, disunion and mutual collision more and more prevail. For if the poet or priest, or by whatever title the inspired thinker may be named, is the sign of vigour and well-being, so likewise is the logician the sign of disease."

We cannot agree with Carlyle that "Metaphysics is the disease of thought," nevertheless there is truth in his general position, that faith brings health and vigour to the soul, and that "the increase of knowledge" is often an "increase of sorrow," because it tends to sap that faith which alive can give gladness and health to the spirit.

We are sometimes asked, however, "Is a man responsible for his beliefs? You cannot compel a man to believe that two and two are equal to five."

But this rests on a false view of Faith. Religious faith is not an intellectual assent to propositions. It is a personal trust—*fiducia*. It depends on another faculty than the reason. It is intuitive, not intellectual in its action—analogous to the trust which a lover has in his beloved. Such a faith has, no doubt, intellectual elements in it; but these are subordinate to the conscience and the will and the emotions, and appeal for their test to the experience, not to the understanding. As Tennyson says:

"If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,  
I heard a voice 'believe no more'  
And heard an ever-breaking shore  
That tumbled in the Godless deep;  
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Then like a man in wrath the heart  
Stood up and answer'd, 'I have felt.'"<sup>2</sup>

It is therefore the will that is the regnant quality in faith. As the American philosopher has said, "There is a will

<sup>1</sup> Essay on "Characteristics," *Misc. Essays*, vol. iv.

<sup>2</sup> *In Memoriam*, cxxiv.

to believe." Hence Christ commands faith, as something it is in the power of the soul to give or withhold. Thus also, Doubt has very often a *moral* root. Among the many cases of religious difficulties I have had to deal with, the overwhelming proportion was traceable to another than purely intellectual causes. Of course a minister does not come as much in contact with the intellectual side of doubt as perhaps other men; still I have usually found that however sincere were the difficulties that kept a young man or woman from confession of Christ, there was on examination something moral behind it, in the character or experience which really determined his or her attitude.

One of these I may recall, as the history was rather curious. It was that of a young man, a medical student of high ideals and outwardly pure moral life. He had difficulties in joining the Church, seemingly of an entirely intellectual kind. I reasoned with him for a long time, and after a while he appeared to overcome his scruples and accepted membership. Some two years later, however, he again appeared in the study and stated that his mind was still perplexed. He now admitted that there was a moral root to his doubts. There was a certain sin in his life which he could not overcome, and the result of his failure was that he had begun to doubt the validity of a faith which could not authenticate its claims by the gift of the power it professed to bestow. He went on to say that a certain evangelist who had then come to the city had greatly impressed him, and that if I could arrange an interview with him he would be deeply obliged. I did so, and for about a month I heard nothing more. He then returned with a very joyful face and told me he had received an "illumination" which had dissipated all his doubts; that faith had come to him in a moment, with such force and power that the sin he had spoken of had completely disappeared and that he was now a new man. How had it all happened? He told me that after explaining some of the perplexities which his medical studies had engendered in his mind, he confessed that he longed to



believe in order to experience the liberty and peace which he hoped lay in such a possession. The evangelist, a distinguished American minister, replied that he could recommend to him many books of Christian evidence ; but that to his mind the best was the Gospel of John, which, he added, was written that "we might believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through His name." "My prescription for your doubt is that every night you should read a chapter of the Gospel with that object clearly in your view, and that before doing so you should sincerely and earnestly offer up this prayer for enlightenment." As he said so he gave him a short hypothetical prayer, asking the Divine Being, if such a Being did exist, to reveal Himself to his mind in so convincing a way that he could no longer doubt His existence. This simple prescription proved remarkably successful, and in a fortnight or so there came one night as he read the familiar verses, such an overpowering sense of reality that his doubts fell away like "scales from his eyes." He believed with full assurance, and in doing so was equipped with a new power to deal with his old besetting sin. He had never given way to it since then. My friend, I may add, gave a full proof of the reality of his "conversion." He only lived indeed some two years after, and died after a very short and distressing illness ; but during all that time he lived a very manly and decided and happy Christian life, and on his death-bed set his seal to the faith in which he died as the sure anchor of all his hopes.

Now we are far from saying that the method here adopted is one to be universally followed. In the genesis of faith or rather its regeneration, as here described, there is strong evidence of the workings of the subliminal consciousness. Old elements of religious teaching were evidently lying dormant in the soul waiting for the kindling spark of a new impulse to explode with revealing power in the soul. Had these not been there, had this young man not been brought up in a pious home, had there not



been a desire for belief, it is at least doubtful if the will to believe would ever have been born.

At the same time, it does prove that in many cases Doubt is really a disease due to a moral root, and that what is needed is a new incoming of supernatural life to counteract those elements that are antagonistic to faith and unite the soul on the side of religious certainty.

There are other cases, it must be admitted, where the root of doubt is more purely intellectual, as in the case of Darwin, where his scientific studies seem to have more and more disintegrated his faith. Yet even there, by his own confession, we see an accompanying atrophy both of his *Æsthetic* and Religious faculties, due to the life he was living. To use his own candid words, his Spiritual eye had become as blind as that of those fishes who swim in the darkness of the Kentucky Cave; because, like theirs, it was unused.<sup>1</sup>

It may be asked, "Is there no use, then, in Christian Evidence, in any appeal to the intellect at all, since faith is all an affair of the Will moved by the Spirit of God?" By no means. Intellectual remedies for doubt are of immense service as supplying those elements in the subconscious workings of the mind which prepare for the final victory of faith. They are, so to speak, those healing medicines, those subtle antitoxins which counteract the poison of doubt, during the period of conflict in which the soul is torn asunder between the claims of doubt and faith. But the final victory must rest with the will.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Charles Darwin*, ch. ii. It will no doubt be objected to—this view of Darwin's spiritual "degeneration"—that it was accompanied by none of the moral decadence we should expect, but that, on the contrary, his life was pursued with a noble honesty of purpose to the end. There is a real difficulty here, and it is not confined to his case. Perhaps the best solution of it is to be found in the fact that in his case the pursuit of knowledge took the form and place of a religious devotion, and that in following it out with such self-sacrificing ardour he was unconsciously a "worshipper of the Highest" in the outer court of the Temple of Nature. This is not inconsistent with believing that by their deficiency of faith such men suffer a grievous loss, but it explains the curious contradiction, so often seen to-day, between lives of lofty Idealism and the dismal materialism of their religious creeds.

“Faith is,” as an American writer says, “the adjusting of life to a Hypothesis,”<sup>1</sup> and it is only when this volitional faculty is acted on by the Divine Spirit that the venture can be successfully taken.

2. We now pass to the second of these maladies of Faith—*Superstition*, or *the misdirection of Faith*.

There is no deficiency of Faith here, rather a superfluity of it; but the matter of it is unclarified. Its contents, though always mingled with some truth, are largely mixed with error, and hence its results spiritually are unwholesome and in many cases pernicious. It may, however, differ vastly in its forms, beginning in such slight tendencies to superstition as are found even in men so holy as John Wesley and Cardinal Newman,<sup>2</sup> and deepening into the various forms of idolatry which we find in Heathenism and Heresy. In its deadliest forms it has been prolific in evil results, giving a divine imprimatur to the worst passions of mankind, immorality and cruelty. Sins of every kind have taken shelter under the shadow of its black wings. Men have dared to do in the name of God what they had never dared in the name of the Devil.

In dealing with this disease of faith we have to consider, first, What is the test of a true and healthy faith? and then, secondly, How can this faith be attained? In other words, we must first be able to diagnose a false faith, and then, secondly, point the way to a true one.

As to the diagnosis of a false faith, we are in presence with one of the most difficult questions of religion—the Canon of religious truth, the seat of Authority in Religion. The most various answers have been given to this question. The Catholic Church of every persuasion has always pointed to the Church as possessing the only canon of a healthy faith. Protestants again have inclined to the Bible. From our point of view, however, there can be but one test of religious truth: its results on the

<sup>1</sup> Professor Coe, *Religion of a Mature Mind*, p. 203.

<sup>2</sup> See Bremond's *Mystery of Newman*, p. 311.

spiritual life of those who believe it. Our Canon of truth is the Canon of Christ—"By their fruits ye shall know them."<sup>1</sup> "Each tree is known by its own fruit."<sup>2</sup> In other words, our position is frankly pragmatism. Truth evidences itself by its working on the life, and this because God has made "a pre-established harmony" between the two. What is true is healthful; what is healthful is true. Changing the words of Keats, we may say, "Truth is health and health is truth—that is all ye know or need to know."

As Mr. Percy Gardiner has said, this may seem to be a universal subjectivity, but it is really a practical objectivity, inasmuch as "it answers when we act upon it as if it were true."<sup>3</sup> Among these fruits of a true faith we would put self-sacrifice first. A faith that is false is almost always self-seeking. A faith that is true works by love. Superstition again is usually conjoined with Charlatanism, Avarice and defectiveness in moral distinctions.

The second and more practical question is how to purify a diseased faith. How shall we make faith a worthy instrument for its work? The Mystics may be supposed to be our guides here, inasmuch as they form the aristocracy of faith. Now the true Mystics have always insisted on the need of a preliminary discipline before the faculty of faith could be trusted. Only "the pure in heart" could "see God."

"Primarily, then, the self must be purged of all that stands between it and goodness, putting on the character of reality instead of the character of illusion or 'sin.' It longs ardently to do this from the first moment in which it sees itself in the all-revealing radiance of the Uncreated Light. 'When once love openeth the inner eye of the soul for to see this truth,' says Hilton, 'with other circumstances that attend it, then beginneth the soul to be really humble; for then through the sight of God it feeleth and seeth itself as it is, and then doth the soul forsake the beholding and leaning upon itself.'"<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii. 16, 20.

<sup>2</sup> Luke vi. 44.

<sup>3</sup> *Exploratio Evangelica*, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> *Mysticism*, by Evelyn Underhill, p. 241.



It is in line with this that Jesus, "the Great Mystic," in His sense of oneness with the Father, and of oneness with the faithful in Him, says: "If any man willeth to do My will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God."<sup>1</sup>

It must, however, be admitted that many pure-minded men have not seldom admitted into their beliefs elements which savour strongly of the fantastic, not to say the superstitious. Such are the "Quellengeister" of Boehme, the "natural philosophy" of Swedenborg and the legends and miracles of Roman Catholic Mysticism. Thus, alongside of the self-discipline of the Spirit, we need as a corrective to the superstitious temper a diligent cultivation of the teaching of Christ in the Gospels. One would be slow to think that any man could know too much of the spiritual or living Christ; yet it is undoubtedly true that unless this mystic vision of the living Christ is mediated through, and daily corrected by the Christ of History, there will certainly grow up a tendency towards the extravagant and the fantastic. The best mystics freely acknowledge this. Thus in *Theologia Germanica* we read: "The false light dreameth itself to be God, and taketh to itself what belongeth to God, as God is in eternity without the creature. Therefore the false light thinketh and declareth itself to be above that life which Christ led in the body, which He possessed in His holy human nature. And this because Christ's life is distasteful and burdensome to nature. Therefore it will have nothing to do with it. But to be God in eternity and not man, or to be Christ as He was after His resurrection, is all easy and conformable to nature, and so it holdeth that to be the best."<sup>2</sup>

These are wise words, and well worthy of our attention just now when so many new fads are represented as the truth of God. The fascination of Spiritualism, *e.g.*, for so many earnest minds to-day would surely receive a check did they more carefully reflect how reserved and comparatively few are the words of Christ on the subject,

<sup>1</sup> John vii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Theologia Germanica*—compressed.

and how in the one parable in which He seems to lift the veil He deprecates its use as an aid to faith.<sup>1</sup>

3. We now pass to the third form of the pathology of Faith—*Hypocrisy*, or *insincerity of Faith*.

When we enter on the examination of this cancer of the spiritual life we feel at once in a new and more tainted atmosphere. Superstition, with all its hideous brood of evils, has at least something noble about it. Its votaries believe in it and are willing to die for it. But in Hypocrisy there is nothing noble. It is selfish to the core, and it prostitutes the noblest feelings of the race in order to gain its ends. Among all spiritual diseases there is none Christ condemned with more unsparing severity. His indictment of it on the Pharisees is unique in its indignation. His language is, as one has said, "tremendous."<sup>2</sup> It amazes us with its passion, its unmeasured denunciation. It strikes us at first as rather the language of personal indignation than judicial condemnation. But the criticism is undeserved. The more we probe this master sin of the human heart, the more we are impressed with the truth of His estimate.

Hypocrisy has two forms—the conscious and the unconscious. Conscious Hypocrisy is really a denial of faith altogether. It is based on the assurance that there is no such thing as real faith at all. God is a non-existent bogey, forged by the imagination of the fearful or the superstitious. But it sees the advantage of making use of this faith as a means of self-aggrandizement. It persuades its victim, therefore, to put on a mask of piety, to act religion before men, in order to win their applause, approbation and support.

This is the superficial or conscious hypocrisy which we usually see depicted in fiction or the drama. Its greatest embodiment is, of course, Molière's *Tartuffe*; but it is a favourite character of Dickens. His Pecksniffs and Chadbands are all of the shallow type. That such

<sup>1</sup> Luke xvi. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Mozley, *University Sermons*, p. 29.

types are to be found in all religious circles is only too true ; but it may be questioned if they are very common to-day. The world is too much on the alert against them. Religious professions, especially of the blatant Dickens' type, do not "go down." Hypocrisy of this kind would have as much chance of success by making "no professions" as by clothing itself in garments so out of fashion to-day as sanctity and faith.

The second form of Hypocrisy, the *unconscious or self-deceived*, is much more subtle, and, therefore, much more dangerous. It is of this Christ accuses the Pharisees when He calls them "a generation of vipers." These Pharisees were not mere formalists putting on a show of religion in which they did not believe. They were earnest, sincere workers for the spread of their own religion. They compassed sea and land to make proselytes. They had a fiery courage of their own, which at last dashed them to pieces against the legions of Rome. "But their activity," says Mozley, in his masterly account of this sin, "had a selfish root, and a selfish scope, while at the same time they disguised this motive from themselves, and this constituted their hypocrisy. They were that combination of earnestness and ambition, which earnestness by an assimilative process *turns* into ambition, and is the feeder of the great passion. . . . Pharisaism was an active religion founded on egotism." <sup>1</sup>

It might seem as if on this account this form of Hypocrisy were less heinous, less loathsome, than the conscious Hypocrisy, since it is to some extent, at least, a sin of ignorance. Less loathsome it may be, but not less heinous, not less serious in its prognosis. For, as we have already seen,<sup>2</sup> one of the most serious symptoms of sin is unconsciousness of guilt. It is this unconsciousness that is the damning feature of Pharisaism. "A hypocrite in the vulgar sense knows he is one, because he deceives another ; but the Scripture hypocrite is the deceived too, and the deceived cannot possibly know he is deceived.

<sup>1</sup> *University Sermons*, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter II.



If he did he would not be deceived. An impenetrable veil hides him from himself, and he is safe from his own scrutiny. 'Evil,' it has been said, 'ventures not to be itself; it is seized with a restless flight from itself, and conceals itself behind any appearance of good.'"<sup>1</sup> Hence the gravity of Christ's attitude to this sin, and the unsparing way in which He pushed the lance of His invective deep into it. He wished, if it were possible, to awaken a conscience narcotized, paralysed—almost dead beneath a mass of self-deception. For the ordinary conscious hypocrite may pursue his love of deception for years before the world, but there are always some moments in which he takes off the mask and beholds the real image of himself. But the unconscious hypocrite has no such moments of self-revealing. He is secure in himself, and is, therefore, open to no appeal, either from conscience or his fellow-men. He is almost incapable of repentance, for self-knowledge is the first condition of repentance, and the Pharisee does not possess self-knowledge. This is what Christ means when He declared that "the publicans and harlots" would go into the kingdom before them,<sup>2</sup> and likened them to sick men who refused to see a physician on the ground that they needed none. "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."<sup>3</sup>

Pharisaism, as Mozley remarks, was possibly a new thing when Christ attacked it. Jewish and Heathen sin before that day were naked and unashamed. But if once new, it is so no longer. "There are no extinct species in the world of evil." If Hypocrisy flourished under the fashionable and triumphant Judaism of the Christian era, it will flourish also under the fashionable and triumphant Christianity of to-day. The piety that in one generation was the conquest of struggle and tears will become in the next the prize of the self-seeker and the cloak of the villain, and the deception will be all the deeper because it will often be joined with the deception of the deceiver.

<sup>1</sup> *University Sermons*, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxi. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Mark ii. 17.

Dr. Andrew Bonar's *Journal* records a curious instance of this self-deception apparently persevered in to the end. When a minister in Glasgow, he was invited to deal with a notorious murderer, who refused to make any confession, though convicted by the most convincing evidences. The case created great interest in the city not only from the diabolical nature of the crime, but from the position of the criminal. He was not only a leading physician but one prominent in religious circles, frequently addressing church meetings. Yet he had been condemned to die for the murder of his wife and mother-in-law in the most heartless circumstances.

It was hoped that so eminent and faithful a minister would bring the guilty man to confession, but his efforts were all in vain. "I have been seeing that murderer," he writes, "a real Pharmakeus<sup>1</sup>—a singular instance of a conscience that has no fear to all appearance and yet no gospel hold. All is cool, light, easy-minded, with a great desire to be thought well of by men." This pretence was kept up to the last. On taking farewell of him, Dr. P—— said, "I will meet you in heaven, Mr. Bonar." The reply of Dr. Bonar was, "I will meet you at the Judgment-seat."<sup>2</sup>

Whether Dr. P—— was a hypocrite of the conscious or unconscious type is hard to say; but probably he was the latter. He had persuaded himself he was justified in what he did, or that God did not require him to make confession to his fellow-men of an act which He had forgiven.

We have mentioned the incident as an illustration of the difficulty the spiritual practitioner must always have in dealing with the evil of self-deception. In the whole calendar of sin there is none more difficult to treat successfully. Yet we must remember that Paul was a Pharisee, that the scales fell from his eyes under the penetrating light of Christ; and that while, so far as we know, few of those whom Christ addressed as "vipers" were converted by the tremendous invective of that denunciation, there

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xxiv. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Bonar, *Diary and Letters*, p. 250.



was at least one, and that the greatest of them all, who was so shaken in his convictions that in after days he was bold enough to bid his fellow-councillors refrain from their persecutions of the early Christians lest by doing so they might be "found even to be fighting against God."<sup>1</sup>

4. We now come to look shortly at the last of the four great classes of these diseases of Faith—that of *Irreverence*, or *the contempt of Faith*.

This has two forms: *Irreverence of language*, directed against men—what we call *Cursing* or *Swearing*—and *Irreverence of thought*, directed against God—what we call *Blasphemy*.

The former is, of course, a much less serious disease of the soul than the latter. It is rather an offspring of passion than any deliberate irreverence toward the Supreme Being, and in our Western civilization is usually considered a somewhat venial offence. In the "holy East," indeed, it has never been so regarded, and among the later Jews to take the awful name of "Jahveh" into polluted lips was a capital offence. This superstitious reverence was rejected by our Lord when He taught His disciples to say, "Our Father"; nevertheless, that name was to be hallowed, and oath-taking in any form seems to have been discouraged by Him.<sup>2</sup>

Profanity, however we regard it, is at best a lack of self-control and, in its worst forms, a loathsome habit. Among the young it is often assumed as a mark of puberty in vice. In the old it is largely due to a violent temper and a defective vocabulary. In every case, however, it is symptomatic of one of the most serious defects that faith can suffer under, a deficiency of Reverence. Reverence is the atmosphere of faith, and where the atmosphere is poisoned, faith cannot live. It is largely conditioned, therefore, by environment. Social conditions

<sup>1</sup> Acts v. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. v. 34; and understood by Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzen and Jerome literally.



of poverty and vice foster its growth. The one-roomed house is as fatal to reverence as it is to purity. A body that has no privacies ends in a soul that has no secrecies. And secrecy is the birthplace of religion. "When thou hast shut the door, pray."<sup>1</sup>

Swearing is one of the most infectious of all spiritual maladies, and this, as well as the lack of home life, is the reason why it is one of the chief vices of the soldier. It may, indeed, be true that the soldier does not mean anything by the foul expletives which issue from his lips often in the most ordinary conversation; but the vice is, nevertheless, a loathsome one and incapacitates the user of it for language that is pure and noble.<sup>2</sup>

Its cure must, therefore, begin in the home. The habit of reverence for divine things, the avoidance of foolish jesting with sacred things and a strict discipline with those who are contracting the noxious habit are the best correctives of irreverence in youth. When once it has been formed it can only be eradicated by a radical change of mind. It is, as we have said, a symptom of a decadence of faith, and the only lasting remedy for it is to be found in "the practice of the presence of God."

When we pass from outward profanity of language to the deeper *profanity of thought*, which in its last development issues in *defiance of God* altogether, we are obviously dealing with an infinitely more serious malady.

Although apparently the opposite of Hypocrisy, Blasphemy is often the last stage of that disease. This is pointed out by Martensen when he remarks that while sin often begins by defending itself against the upbraidings of Conscience by a hypocritical self-deception, sooner or later this mask becomes too heavy to be borne.<sup>3</sup> The hypocrite's cloak is cast aside, and the soul takes refuge in a frenzied and open hatred of God or a blasphemous Atheism. This condition, which is not so much the disease as the death of faith, is described by Paul as a "hatred of

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Jas. iii. 11, 12.

<sup>3</sup> Martensen, *Christian Ethics* (Individual), Eng. trans., p. 117.

God,"<sup>1</sup> and "an insusceptibility to all moral feeling."<sup>2</sup> It is never found alone, but is always accompanied by an ethical ruin, in which a previous history of immorality, an anarchical hatred of human society, and sometimes an inhuman cruelty are prominent features. It has been nakedly set forth by Nietzsche as the Gospel of the Superman. "Take heart, ye higher men! Now, for the first time, the mountain of man's future is in travail. God is dead. We now want the Superman to live."<sup>3</sup> "This new table I put up for you—*Become Hard*."<sup>4</sup>

It is this last infinitely tragic condition of the soul Christ refers to when He speaks of "the Sin against the Holy Ghost." That sin which He warns the Pharisees of being in danger of has been well described by Julius Müller as "the hatred of what is recognized to be divine."<sup>5</sup> It is not so much a definite sin as a state. It is not so much a disease as the end of all spiritual disease. It is, in fact, the death of the soul.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. iv. 18, 19.

<sup>3</sup> "Thus spake Zarathustra," iv.

<sup>4</sup> *The Old and New Tables*, par. 29.

<sup>5</sup> *Christian Doctrine of Sin*, bk. iv.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ISSUE OF SIN

WE have now come to a close of our examination of the spiritual diseases of human nature. One great fact emerges from it—*the solidarity of sin*. While there are many resemblances between the maladies of the body and those of the soul, in one feature they are strikingly different. Bodily diseases are distinct from each other—individual in their origin, progress and end. Spiritual diseases, on the other hand, are closely inter-related. As Martensen says, “They entwine with each other like twigs out of the same tree.”<sup>1</sup>

No doubt there is a certain analogy to this in physical diseases. They, too, are often complicated by “intercurrent affections.” They have *sequelæ* sometimes more dangerous than themselves. On the whole, however, they are much more easily differentiated, rising from a definite cause, pursuing their own path and progressing to an individual end.

But with spiritual maladies, no perfect line of demarcation can often be distinguished. They tend to merge into each other much more readily; and when their deepest root is probed, it is always found to be the same, the impairment or the loss of the God-consciousness in the soul, caused by Selfishness or an all-devouring Egoism. Thus while in their symptomatic treatment there may be great divergence, their radical cure is always one and the same. “This is eternal life, to know Thee, the living and true God.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Ethics*, par. 33.

<sup>2</sup> John xvii. 3.



In the Second Part we propose taking up this "divine remedy for sin." In the present chapter we deal with the progress of sin when it is unchecked by any such remedy. Our subject is a solemn one, *the issue of irremediable sin*.

The beginnings of sin are sporadic. That is to say, they appear in childhood as little outbursts of temper or self-will, showing clearly the presence of an evil disposition beneath; but they have no fixed character. They have no habitual or constitutional power, and, while they often clearly indicate what in future life may grow into a habit, they are easily cured by a wise discipline and a healthy environment.

By and by, however, these sins take on a chronic character. They become ingrained in the nature, and, while they are not yet by any means seriously destructive of the soul, they already form part of that heavy weight of evil tendency which it carries forward into the great battle of the soul lying before it, as we emerge into manhood or womanhood.

The years of puberty are undoubtedly of critical importance in shaping what is to be the condition of spiritual health or disease with which the battle of life is to be begun. Then it is that the imagination awakens to the new and perilous beauty of desires hitherto unknown. The Sexual Impulse springs into being with a bewildering power, all the more fascinating because the delights it offers are unknown. Curiosity urges forth the soul to pluck "the forbidden fruit" of that tree whose "knowledge" may be either infinite good or infinite evil. At the same time, human companionship takes on new and alluring forms. While, to crown all, the Intellect awakens and begins to put to the soul those "obstinate questionings," "blank misgivings of a creature moving about in worlds not realised as yet,"<sup>1</sup> questions whose answers may destroy faith almost in a moment.

It would, of course, be a vast mistake to suppose that because sin is more dangerous in the adolescent stage, the

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth, "Ode to Immortality."

sense of God is therefore always lost or even diminished. It would be a calumny on its great Creator if the soul were left thus to wander on unhelped and unguided. "He yearns jealously for the spirit He hath set within us."<sup>1</sup> The tender love He feels for the soul at all times is surely never so much exercised as then. Hence it is often at this time that Religion makes to the soul its strongest and most convincing appeal. The "sick soul," sick of itself, stretches out its hands to God in an earnest cry, which often becomes a birth hour in the spiritual life and the beginning of a divine life in the soul, which never ends.

Professor Starbuck's statistics confirm this. Though his conclusions are coloured by the American temperament and religious methods, he is generally right in saying that, "Conversion is an adolescent phenomenon, occurring in females most frequently between thirteen and sixteen, and amongst males at seventeen and immediately before and after that year."<sup>2</sup> From this coincidence between the age of Puberty and the usual period of "Conversion" some Psychologists have adopted the ridiculous opinion that Religion is an offshoot of the Sexual Instinct. There is a connection between the two; but it is rather one of antagonism than production.

If the change of heart then experienced be a real one, these dangerous years will become times of deepened conviction and moral renewal; but if not, they will leave a residuum of moral habit in the soul, which will give spiritual disease a new hold upon it. Sin now becomes specialized. It assumes one or more of the specific forms we have been considering—some fleshly passion if the animal nature predominates, or some mental affection if the temperament inclines to more subtle forms of Egoism. In women, the latter is usually the case. Thus the biographer of Madame Guyon says: "With ripening years, religion gave place to vanity. She began to love dress and feel jealous of rival beauties. Like St. Theresa, she

<sup>1</sup> Jas. iv. 5; Dr. Moffatt's translation.

<sup>2</sup> *Psychology of Religion*, p. 20.

sat far up into the night devouring romances. Her autobiography records her experience of the mischievous effects of those tales of chivalry and passion.”<sup>1</sup>

Two significant features may now be noted: a decadence of the religious affections (Indifference) and an atrophy of the human affections (Heartlessness). The love of parent, sister, or even wife, becomes chilled, and such affections as remain are squandered on the objects of sensual gratification. This deterioration may go on unchecked until the character is totally lost. The man becomes known as “a bad man.” The woman is shunned as a “loose woman.” At mid-life, however, there may be a recrudescence of the religious sense—a desire to return to “the days of our youth.” This has been strangely overlooked by Mr. Starbuck, when he adds to his statement regarding the general age of conversion the remark that “if conversion has not occurred before twenty, the chances are that it will never be experienced.” This is surely to forget some of the most notable conversions of history. Tolstoi’s experience has already been referred to. To these we may add those of St. Paul, St. Augustine, Colonel Gardiner, John Newton and Thomas Chalmers. In fact, the most moving conversions of history have taken place in the thirties and even forties. And these are only typical of thousands never known, either in the literature of religion or the statistics of evangelists. The sense of growing old has, perhaps, something to do with it. The occurrence often of some serious physical malady or the sorrows of life may be predisposing causes. At all events, it is true that the “hilltop” of life is often one of the most religious epochs in life’s stages. Spiritual teachers, instead of constantly addressing young men, should be on the look out for those who are spiritually ripe for revival “in the midst of the years.”<sup>2</sup>

Should mid-life pass without any or only a partial reformation, sin now assumes another and still deeper

<sup>1</sup> Vaughan, *Hours with the Mystics*, vol. ii. p. 208.

<sup>2</sup> Hab. iii. 2.



form. It usually attacks the more vital centres of man's being, the mental affections and the spiritual nature. The diseases of the flesh may remain, but with the exception of Alcoholism they usually persist in a less predominant form. On the other hand, the diseases of the mental affections become more powerful and engrossing. Avarice especially is regnant over every other feeling. Pride and ambition swell out like great cancerous tumours in the spiritual life. Under the effect of these, the spiritual faculty becomes atrophied. Hypocrisy takes the place of Doubt, Superstition usurps the seat of Faith, Profanity or Blasphemy becomes an excuse for a life of flagrant immorality, and the soul at last sinks into that state which we have already described "as past feeling, and to every good work reprobate."<sup>1</sup>

We have attempted to describe the life-story of a typical degenerate, what Bunyan would call a "Life and Death of Mr. Badman." But we cannot hide from ourselves the fact that in the vast majority of cases there is no such clear line of demarcation between the good and the bad. Mr. Selby asks in one of his sermons—"I know what is to become of the sheep and the goats, but what about the Alpacas?"<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately for our analysis, the Alpacas vastly preponderate. What takes place in these mingled characters is a state of chronic sin, interspersed with earnest periods of partial repentance and reformation. From the medicinal view, they must be regarded as Spiritual Invalids, men and women more or less such all their days. Religiously they hover between a condition of Doubt and Indifference. Their interests are not deeply religious at all. They are only interested in the things of the earth—in meat and drink, and honour and display; but they are not depraved enough to part with religion altogether. They give "a residue"<sup>3</sup> to God, and pay it as they do their taxes, without enthusiasm and with much reluctance, as a necessary evil. To determine

<sup>1</sup> Tit. i. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *The Imperfect Angel*, by T. G. Selby.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. xlv. 17.

the spiritual life of such invertebrates is hard indeed. The best that can be said of them is, that they have a desire for God in their better moments, and that they cannot relinquish Him altogether. The worst that must sometimes have to be affirmed is that religion is too often an empty form in their life, with no reality behind it. They have a name to live, but "are dead."<sup>1</sup>

It is the presence of such phenomena in the spiritual life that complicates and perplexes the eschatological questions we have now to put. What is the end of spiritual disease? Is there such a state as spiritual death, and if so, when does it take place? At the death of the body, or before it or after it? Does it mean the extinction of personality, the annihilation of the soul? Or is eternal death compatible with an immortality of the personal life? Does it, in other words, mean eternal dying?

As to the first of these questions—*Is there such a state as spiritual death?* the answer which Spiritual Medicine would give to such a question is an unqualified affirmative. It is of the nature of all disease to end in death if it be not arrested, and we have no reason either in experience or divine revelation to postulate any exception in Spiritual life. It is true that the perplexing phenomena we have just considered of characters indeterminate for good or evil, might lead us to postpone such a definitive result beyond the years of physical existence; but they give us no ground for supposing that there must not come a time when the struggle between good and evil in the soul shall end one way; when the balance will irrevocably come down either on the side of life or death, when, in a word, the judgment-day will not dawn. General experience tends to confirm the view that there is either a progress or a retrogression in the soul, and that character becomes more and more fixed as the years go by. And this judgment is confirmed by Scripture, and especially

<sup>1</sup> Rev. iii. 1.

by the attitude of Christ to this question. As Dr. Denney once said in the writer's hearing: "Let no one think he can be wiser than Christ on the question of human destiny. He who knew what was in man said there were but two classes and two only—Wheat and Tares, Wise and Foolish, Sheep and Goats."<sup>1</sup> "The end of these things," adds Paul, "is death."<sup>2</sup>

While, however, our viewpoint of the facts of the spiritual life confirms the truth that death is the wages of sin, it is not so conclusive as to the precise time when such an end should take place. The traditional view, of course, is that spiritual death coincides in time with physical death. Eternal death is, according to the orthodox view, the coming together of physical and moral death, the two reaching completeness in their union.

The chief passage in the New Testament on which the upholders of the doctrine that physical death is definitive of human destiny, is Christ's statement in the parable of "Dives and Lazarus": "Beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, that they which would pass from hence to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from thence to us."<sup>3</sup> Such a statement does certainly suggest the conclusion that for many "beyond the veil," the condition is one of moral fixity and irrevocable destiny. But, obviously, it by no means compels us to assume it is so for all. The Rich Man confessedly had his chance. His inhumanity and indifference were pursued in the face of daily opportunities for charity and benevolence. His "probation" was therefore over. His soul was dead, or hopelessly dying, and no power, human or Divine, could bring it back across that gulf which separates death from life.

But in many other cases it is confessedly not so. They have, many of them, died in a moment in the dawn of life, when character is unfixed, and the soul has had no chance to determine its own destiny. They have perhaps been brought up in a heathen environment, where

<sup>1</sup> Sermon on 2 Cor. ii. 14-16.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. vi. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xvi. 26.



the name of Christ has never been heard. Or they have been nurtured in vice and ignorance, where moral responsibility is not to be expected in the fullest sense of such a word. Our sense of justice, as well as the teaching of Scripture, forbids the belief that for all such moral invertebrates the shutting of the door of death must mean the sounding of the knell of hope.

St. Peter seems to teach, in his famous passage about Christ preaching to "the spirits in prison," that the gospel is not shut out from the ears of all who pass into the incarnate life;<sup>1</sup> and if what seems to be the plain meaning of his words is rejected, we have at least the larger hope suggested by our Lord's own words, "The servant . . . that knew not and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes."<sup>2</sup>

The subject has come into new prominence in the great war through the mystery of "the men that die in battle." Many of these are plainly "alpacas." They are men of the most strangely mingled nature; filled with the finest qualities of courage, good-humour, unselfishness and patriotism. Yet alongside of these things there is often a total indifference to spiritual things, and, it must also be said, moral pollution both of lip and life. One of these very men once suggested to the writer the very reflection here set down. Must our moral sense not demand an intermediate state of development and moral purgation for such men? We could only answer that in the Father's House there were many mansions, and that in these there were infinite possibilities for spiritual development on the part of all those who had in them any germ of the Divine life at all.

We are glad to notice that two of the most distinguished ministers of the Scottish Church have boldly taken up this attitude.<sup>3</sup> For our own part, it is one we have long

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 18-20.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xii. 48.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. Dr. Maclean of St. Cuthbert's Parish Church, Edinburgh, and Rev. Dr. Sclater of New North United Free Church, in a little book entitled *God and the Soldier*.

inclined to; not from sentimental grounds, but on those of the Psychology of Faith. What is physical death? It is only the resolution into its original atoms of the outward shell in which the soul is enshrined. To declare that such an experience, however solemn it might be—and we do not deny for one moment its solemnity—should have in it the power to fix for ever the destiny of a soul, seems to us to give the physical an importance beyond that which it deserves. Great and important must death, no doubt, be in its influence on him who passes through it. None of us can tell how great. But surely if it be influential in the inner feelings of the soul, it must be regarded as doing so rather in the direction of what is good than what is evil. We have here no facts to go on. All we can indulge in is a reverent hope; but we can at least say this, that there is nothing in physical death itself to pronounce the close of moral probation.

While, however, we take this view, it must not be supposed that we seek in any way to minimize the importance of this life as *the natural opportunity of the soul*. Spiritual medicine gives no countenance to such an easy optimism. On the contrary, its general conclusions bear all the other way. For by its conception of sin as a disease, with its definite causes and regular development and certain end, it teaches us that, as the bodily physician can usually or often pronounce a prognosis of the disease he is treating after it has reached a certain stage, so not less can the spiritual. There are abundance of cases which proclaim by every law of the spiritual life that their end is morally certain. For such, no intermediate state can do anything. They are already, to all outward seeming, hopeless. For them death can only mean the fall of the axe on a tree that is already dead. Of them experience confirms what otherwise would seem a pitiless judgment: "He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still; and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still,"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xxii. 11.

We close with a consideration of the third and last of these questions of future destiny—as to the meaning and content of *eternal death*. Does spiritual death mean *the extinction of consciousness and the annihilation of personality*? The answer which is suggested by the remedial view of Christianity to this question cannot be a definite one. For remedial Christianity goes on the facts of experience in reaching its conclusions, and we have absolutely no facts to guide us in this matter. Our attitude must therefore be one of reverent Agnosticism on a question which revelation and experience have alike left in doubt.

Speaking, however, from the point of view of the probable, and arguing from the analogy of physical death, we would say that a medicinal view of Christianity would incline to an affirmative answer to this question. Science knows of death only as the dissolution of the elements in which the life was enshrined, and if spiritual death be the same as physical, it, too, must mean the dissolution of the whole personality which is thus attacked by it.

The grounds on which it reaches this conclusion are not, however, the usual ones of believers in a Conditional Immortality. According to these, the soul does not possess in itself the capacity of immortal life. That is the gift of Christ, and is solely bestowed on those who have faith in Him “who alone hath immortality”<sup>1</sup> This is the view advocated with such eloquence by Dr. Edward White in his well-known *Life in Christ*.

It is also held by Mr. J. B. Heard as a conclusion from his “tripartite division of man,” already referred to.<sup>2</sup> According to him, the Soul or Psyche is not immortal. It lost that through the deadening of the Spirit or Pneuma at the Fall. Hence our hope of immortality must depend not on any “natural immortality of the Psyche, but in the gift of eternal life to the Pneuma, when quickened and renewed in the image of God.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter IV.

<sup>3</sup> *Tripartite Division of Man*, p. 353.



While, however, we agree with the view that Eternal Life depends on the union of the soul with God, we cannot agree with that Psychology which deprives the natural man of the Pneuma or Spirit on account of a previous "Fall." This, as we have already seen, is not the Pauline view as understood by the most recent Biblical Psychologists, nor is it true to human experience. Experience does not prove that sin, as we see it in the newborn child, has completely destroyed the divine presence there. On the contrary, we all feel the poet to be right when he says that we come into the world "trailing clouds of glory from God who is our home."

Sin has only impaired the divine presence in the soul, not destroyed the spiritual nature of man; and it is only when this takes place, after a life of persistent evil-doing, that the Pneuma can be killed and the immortal side of man's nature withdrawn.

This is substantially the view of one of the greatest evangelical thinkers — Richard Rothe. He holds that while the soul is not in itself imperishable, it has the power to acquire immortality. This it only can do by a *moral renewal through a regeneration by the Spirit of God*. Such regeneration usually takes place in this life, but it may be possible in the intermediate state. It is, however, only a possibility there; and if it does not then take place, the soul is given up by the Spirit of God to that law of decay and dissolution which is the end of all merely natural existence.<sup>1</sup>

Our attitude to sin as a spiritual disease of the soul would naturally favour such a hypothesis; but it must be clearly understood to be only a hypothesis. We have no facts to base any definite theory upon.

It has been objected to it that Christ speaks of "Eternal Punishment," and that if "eternal life" means "endless life," eternal punishment must mean endless torment. But why should eternal punishment involve the

<sup>1</sup> *Dogmatik*, iii. 133-169. See Principal Salmond's *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 606. It was also that of Dr. Dale.

eternity of those who are punished? If I punish a man with death, I punish him eternally, because I shut him out of life for ever. Eternal punishment may mean simply a punishment whose results are eternal. Whether the person so punished goes on existing for ever, is quite another question, and surely the answer to it is at least doubtful when the Apostle Paul speaks of it as an "eternal destruction from the face of the Lord."<sup>1</sup> An "eternal destruction," combined with an "eternal existence," approaches the conception of a contradiction.

It may be said—Does Psychology favour the idea of a "Waste of Soul" through sin? To quote the words of Dr. Salmond: "Does experience favour the idea that the result of evil passion is the waste or extinction of the passionate self? Is sin a physical thing, a poisonous virus affecting the soul, as disease affects the body? Persistent indulgence in sin certainly deadens feeling and weakens the will. But in deadening moral feeling, does it deaden immoral impulse? In making the will feeble in the choice of good, does it render it inoperative in the choice of evil? Do pride, hatred, envy, wrath, tend to become extinct, as they have the rein given them? If it is in the nature of sin and passion to wear out, what is it they do wear out? Is it the evil will, the evil affections, the evil consciousness? These make up the evil nature; but have we reason to suppose it tends to obliteration under indulgence?"<sup>2</sup>

The answer to this is, that there is a confusion here between the disease and the nature which is diseased. Of course, the evil desires do not die out until they have run their course. A disease does not weaken as its victim weakens. Rather it increases till near the end. By Dr. Salmond's own confession, will and feeling are deadened and weakened by sin. And are not will and feeling the very essence of personality? Dr. Salmond's experience may differ from the writer's, but his does confirm the view

<sup>1</sup> 2 Thess. i. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, pp. 621, 622, abridged.

that in the majority of open sinners there is a decided flickering out of personality at the end of a long course of self-indulgence, a withering of the affections, and a final loss of all interest in life.

No doubt in certain abnormal sinners it is not so. In these there may persevere a titanic force of evil up to the end. It is in these cases that the death of the soul may be supposed to be long and painful, the slow and retributive action of Divine Justice.

After all, spiritual death does not depend on any so-called "waste of soul." It is due to the withdrawal of the Divine Spirit from the soul of man. No matter how much or how little "soul-stuff" remains to be wasted, when that separation takes place the soul must die. What exactly that death of the soul is, we may never be able exactly here to say. We only know it must be something inconceivably awful: perhaps to some more awful than to others. As physical death may be the quick passage of a moment or the consummation of long and agonizing torture, so "spiritual death" may be mercifully rapid, or attended with the agonizing experiences of protracted dissolution. It is in these latter cases that there may lie the possibilities of Divine retribution, and it is of them we may suppose our Lord was speaking when He spoke the solemn words about "the worm that dieth not" and "the fire that is not quenched."<sup>1</sup> In either case, however, whether instantaneous or due to the slow protracted processes of ages, the death of the soul is from its merely negative side one of inconceivable desolation, and is quite sufficient of itself to give urgency to the gospel message.

<sup>1</sup> Mark ix. 48.



## PART II

### *THE REMEDY OF SIN*

“Why, all the souls that were, were forfeit once,  
And He that might the vantage best have took  
Found out the remedy.”

## CHAPTER I

### SALVATION AS LIFE

THUS far our study has led us—sin is a disease whose essence is, as Augustine says, “the privation of God.” “It is,” says Schleiermacher, “the relative weakness of the God-consciousness, as compared with the strength of the sensuous impulses.”<sup>1</sup> It begins with the gradual withdrawal of that which is the true life of the soul, the knowledge and love of God. At first there emerges a sense of pain and uneasiness which, after sin has been openly yielded to, deepens into a feeling of positive guilt. Then ensues the attempt, successful for the time, to stifle conscience by illegitimate indulgences. Grace as well as nature “abhors a vacuum,” and the vacant heart becomes the tenant of “unclean spirits” which complete the work of soul-destruction.

Hence on the threshold of our discussion of the question of a Remedy for Sin, we are confronted by the thought of salvation as a new principle of life. Our attitude to it is, in a word, Johannine. Christ is life, and what the sick soul needs most of all is life. The “sum of saving knowledge” therefore is found in what will be generally acknowledged the epitome of the Gospel: “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”<sup>3</sup>

It is worth noting that what is before the mind of the speaker of these words is not, as is usually assumed, a law-court, but a *hospital*. No doubt the sentence of death

<sup>1</sup> *Die Christliche Glaube*, par. 36-39.

<sup>2</sup> John iii. 16.

pronounced on the disobedient Israelites is judicial, but it comes through the natural process of disease. What the context shows us, is a wilderness of dying men. The poison of the fiery serpents is working in their veins through agony and torpor to its inevitable termination. It is Christ's "Vision of Sin." "We are men of ruined blood." Moral evil is working like a poison in the centres of man's being, issuing in spiritual distress and ending in spiritual death.

But a cure has been provided for. "He that might the vantage best have took, found out the remedy." "As Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may *in Him* have eternal life."<sup>1</sup>

It is, surely, a confirmation of the validity of our attitude to find it thus taken up in what will be generally regarded as the central text of the New Testament. It is, however, most of all to be noted that salvation is here regarded not only as a principle of life, but that this life comes through the mediation of Jesus Christ. We have not merely "the witness that God gave unto us eternal life," but that "this life is in His Son."<sup>2</sup>

It is here Christianity parts company with all pantheistic systems of salvation. "What need," ask these, "for a Mediator? Why cannot the soul by its own resolution promote its own recovery?" Thus Mr. R. W. Trine, to quote one of the most popular of these prophets of auto-suggestion, likens the soul to a garden which has degenerated into a desert because its inflow of fresh water has been diverted from its channel, and the lake which it fed has been choked with ugly weeds. What is needed, therefore, is to open up the channel again and direct the water to its proper task of irrigation. This we can do by simply thinking ourselves back to God. All we need is to open the sluices of our souls to the thought of God, to let His love infill our being, to think His thoughts and so become one with His life. "To recognize our

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 14, 15.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John v. 11.



own divinity and our intimate relation to the universal, is to attach the belts of our machinery to the powerhouse of the universe. One need remain no longer in hell than one chooses. We can rise to any heaven we ourselves choose; and when we choose so to rise, all the higher powers of the universe combine to help us heavenward.”<sup>1</sup>

To this writer Christ is a higher power, but in no other sense than Socrates or Buddha or indeed any “cosmic emotion” suggested by Nature or Art. We have no “mediator” because we need none. To the same category belong the widely divergent systems of Pantheistic Idealism, Esoteric Buddhism, Christian Science and Spiritualism in some of its forms. In these Christ is no more than a teacher of the Way of Life. More than this He need not be. More than this He cannot be.

Without denying the spiritual value that is to be found, more or less, in these systems—since no man can come into touch with the Universal without being uplifted in some degree—experience teaches that for the mass of men at least something more than a vague and unhistorical thought of God is necessary. No doubt, those who live to-day in the light of the Christian Revelation, import so much of the Christian content into their thoughts of “the higher powers” that for them Christ is unconsciously the Mediator of much of their thinking; but even in these there is often a vagueness of outline and an indeterminateness of moral quality which leads to disastrous results.

The defect of all pantheistic systems of soul-healing is twofold. They either fail to give the Divine Righteousness sufficient prominence, or they do not provide a strong enough motive power to reach it. Sin is something to be forgotten, not forgiven; and the ethical ideal is often painfully low. The deity the self-healer worships is usually an enlarged picture of himself, limited by his own aspirations and often tainted by his own self-indulgences.

<sup>1</sup> *In Tune with the Infinite*, by Ralph Waldo Trine.

As Mr. Chesterton wittily puts it: "That Jones shall worship the god within turns out ultimately to be that Jones shall worship Jones. Let Jones worship the sun or moon or anything rather than 'the inner light.' Let Jones worship cats or crocodiles, if he can find any in his street; but not the god within. Christianity came into the world, firstly to assert with violence that a man had not only to look inwards, but to look outwards; to behold with astonishment and enthusiasm a divine Company and a divine Captain."<sup>1</sup>

We have an illustration of the ethical outcome of such a creed in Mr. Hamilton Wells's recent attempt to construct a new religion. Driven back by the war on the need for a personal God, and tortured by the mystery of suffering of which it has given us such a spectacle, he proclaims for our worship a Divine Captain or "Invisible King," who is conceived of as a "Finite God," fighting his way through history to an empire of peace and goodwill. This god is not the only god. Behind him is the "veiled being" of Nature out of which the universe has been created or is evolving. But to this god of nature our "young god" has no filial attitude, but on the contrary a spirit of antagonism, not unlike that of the ancient Prometheus—a rebel against the cruel indifference of Nature to suffering and righteousness.

To this god Mr. Wells attaches some admirable qualities: Courage, Justice, Youthfulness and Goodness; but he nowhere tells us where he gets them or how he can help us to acquire them. His god has no "history." He is truly an "Invisible King," the creation of an ideal which for all Mr. Wells can tell us about him has as much reality as that of a dragon or a fairy. There is no uplift in such a deity: no proof of love to draw out love, and in one significant feature a failure of the ethical ideal. This is in regard to sexual purity. "God," he tells us, "is concerned with the health and fitness and vigour of his servants. We owe him our best and utmost; but he has no special con-

<sup>1</sup> *Orthodoxy*, by G. K. Chesterton.

cern and no special preferences or commandments concerning sexual things.”<sup>1</sup> He tries to find support for his laxity in Christ by falling into the common error that because Jesus was tender to the female victims of impurity He thought little of their guilt; the fact being, as we have seen elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> that the opposite was the case. Christ was tender to the “woman of the city” not because He thought little of her sin, but because of the awful degradation her life led to. But the failure of Mr. Wells on a point so crucial is enough to show how inefficient his creed must be in producing the highest ethical results. If these things are done in the green tree of theory, what will be done in the day of actual life?

We therefore very cordially agree with what Hermann has so beautifully said: that the only true basis for fellowship with God must be found in a knowledge of and faith in the historical Christ. “The subjective experiences of the Christian religion cannot be severed from the objective forces which lead us into these experiences. . . . Mere emotion cannot raise us into a new life, for mere emotion leaves us alone with ourselves and with what we have already attained, and nothing more. The new state of feeling into which the Christian has entered always clings to something richer than itself, which it distinguishes from its own nature; that is, it needs an objective reality.”<sup>3</sup>

What we cannot understand is his and his master’s<sup>4</sup> antagonism to the mystics on this question on the ground that they disregard “the link between the inner life of the Christian and its real foundation.”<sup>5</sup> That many mystics have given reason for this criticism we admit, but it is by no means true of the best of them. Thus Ruysbroeck says: “There is an error of those who like to call themselves Theopaths. They take every impulse to be divine and repudiate all responsibility.” In opposition to this he declares that “Christ must be the rule and pattern of all

<sup>1</sup> *God: the Invisible King*, p. 164.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter V.

<sup>3</sup> *Die Christliche Verkehr mit God*, Eng. tr., p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> Ritschl.

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 38.



our lives.”<sup>1</sup> The true Christian mystics, while they insisted on a present communion with the exalted Christ, always kept fast hold of the historical Christ as the Way to the Father. “Had they been asked if they regretted not living in Gospel times, they would doubtless have answered that there was nothing in the four Gospels half so wonderful as the unrecorded sayings of the eternal Christ, spoken in the secret temple of their heart. Yet they never failed to recognize that exalted and living One as ‘this same Jesus’ who walked in Galilee and was crucified on Calvary.”<sup>2</sup> We must emphasize this, as our position in this essay is essentially mystical, in the best sense of that word—the sense in which Paul and John were mystics, seeing in Christianity a secret of union with God through Christ. *Spiritual Healing means that and nothing less; or more.* It is the incoming of the Divine into the Human. Eternal life, as Professor Drummond has pointed out, is a perfect correspondence of the living thing with its environment.<sup>3</sup> In the case of the soul, this environment is God. To come into perfect correspondence with God through the knowledge of Him as He is revealed in His Son—this is to restore the lost vitality of the soul and to maintain in it that “promise and potency” of eternal life which it had when originally made in the image of God.

But what is this knowledge of God? It is not, we need hardly say, a book-knowledge. It is the knowledge of persons: it is the knowledge of intimacy and love and trust. The way to it, as the great text we have already quoted, and as all the New Testament reminds us, is by *faith*. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth* in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” But what is faith? From the point of view of our thesis, it is just *the receptivity of the soul*, the channel by which the divine life passes into

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Dean Inge in *Christian Mysticism*, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> *Meaning and Value of Mysticism*, by E. Hermann, pp. 330, 331.

<sup>3</sup> *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, p. 203 ff.

the spirit of man. It is not a special sense belonging to the soul and to be distinguished from his ordinary mental faculties. Rather it is, as Professor Bruce has it, "the function of the whole mind exercised on religion."<sup>1</sup> When we dissect it, we see that, like every mental phenomenon, it is composed of three great elements—Feeling, Knowledge and Will.

It begins in *Feeling*, in a sense of infinite need ; due in childhood and youth to a craving for Someone stronger than self to rest upon ; due in manhood to the workings of conscience and a longing to be right with God. Its second action is that of *Knowledge*, an intellectual apprehension, more or less clear, of a Divine Power, willing and able to supply this need, on taking the next step of a loving trust in and reliance on this Power (*fiducia*). Then follows the regnant act of *Appropriation*, when the will goes forward to identify itself with the new way of life thus laid down for its acceptance. To this there ensues, at a longer or shorter interval, the feeling of *Assurance*, a joyful trust in God, resulting partly from the relief gained by its decision but chiefly by the soul's finding the venture of faith confirmed by its experience—an experience of moral recovery from the paralysis of sin or of reconciliation with God, "the love of God shed abroad in the heart."<sup>2</sup>

Thus, as Dean Inge puts it, "The life of the spirit perhaps begins with feeling and perhaps will be consummated in mere feeling, when 'that which is in part will be done away'; but during its struggles to enter into its full inheritance, it gathers up into itself the activities of all the faculties, which act harmoniously together as the organism to which they belong is in a healthy state."<sup>3</sup>

Thus *faith*, as Mr. Skrine says, *is life*. "What to the vine-branch is living that to man is believing. We are

<sup>1</sup> *Kingdom of God*, by A. B. Bruce, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. v. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Christian Mysticism*, by R. W. Inge, p. 331. To the same effect, see also his handbook on *Faith and its Psychology*.

like the branch. We are saved if we abide in the Vine—that is, if we are alive. If life is the adjustment of the internal relations of a living thing to the external relations, Faith is the response of the organism which we name the soul to that environment which we call God.”<sup>1</sup>

We have called the volitional element in faith its *regnant* part. It is this that leads it into action and makes religious truths “value judgments” for the soul. It is on this that the Spirit of God most emphatically acts in “persuading and enabling” the soul to identify itself with the line of action which feeling and knowledge point out as the way of life. This distinguishes faith from scientific certitude. There is no freedom because no alternative in accepting the latter. You have no option in believing that all the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. But in faith there is always a possible alternative, and therefore, as the American psychologists tell us, there must ever be a “will to believe.”

We must not, however, let the Will usurp an absolute monarchy over faith, as the Voluntarists tend to do. A faith that depends on mere will is unhealthy, superficial, spasmodic, transitory. Faith to be strong and permanent must be motivated by a vigorous intellectual and a deep emotional activity. This will become apparent when we discuss the methods of conversion. Meanwhile we must pass on to look at *the special contents of faith*,—what exactly it is that faith lays hold upon and in the appropriation of which the soul attains to “everlasting life.”

The Apostle John, speaking as the mouthpiece of his Master, here lays this down in one short phrase—*Jesus Christ*. “*Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.*” The sum of saving knowledge is to John to know Christ, because to know Christ is to know God, and to know God is eternal life.<sup>2</sup> This is also the view of all the great teachers of the New Testament. It is emphatically so with Paul. “Christ,” he says, “is

<sup>1</sup> *What is Faith?* by J. H. Skrine, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> John xiv. 9, xvii. 3.



made unto us wisdom from God" . . . "righteousness and sanctification and redemption."<sup>1</sup>

But advancing further we have to ask, What does "Christ" mean as "Wisdom from God"? What is the knowledge of God we receive from Him, which by accepting becomes to us "God's remedy for sin"?

The answer which the New Testament gives to this great question is a twofold one. Jesus Christ comes to us first as *the Revealer of God*, and then secondly, when we have learned to know and fear His holy love, as our *Redeemer from sin*. In other words, there is truth in the old distinction of the work of Christ as *Prophet* and as *Priest*. For to return to our medical analogy, Christ is not only *Physician*, but He is *Medicine* as well.

Sometimes in medical practice a doctor, after he has done all he can to save his patient by treatment and the administering of drugs, finds he can only complete his work by giving himself. In one of the hospitals of Paris there is a number of memorial tablets of physicians who have thus given themselves for a patient's life. Sometimes they have sucked into their lungs the diphtheritic poison that was choking a young life; sometimes the sacrifice has been made in another way; but however made, the double price has been paid. The physician has had to give himself that his patient might live.

It is so with the healing work of Christ. His work was in the first place a teaching one—to teach men what God was, to show them that He was a loving father and that their highest peace lay in trust in Him. This He did not merely by doctrine but by life. "The life was the light of men."<sup>2</sup> Hence faith in these early days took the form rather of an "Imitatio Christi"—"Follow Me," "Learn of Me," and "ye shall find rest to your souls."<sup>3</sup>

The fact that Jesus made faith so largely an ethical thing has led to some perplexity among those who

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 30.

<sup>2</sup> John i. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xi. 29, 30.

remember how differently "faith in Him" is represented in the rest of the New Testament as a "resting on" Him, and especially on His Cross. Harnack has especially emphasized the difference by the astounding statement that the Christianity of Christ was never preached by the apostles at all, and that there are two Gospels in the New Testament—the Gospel of the Synoptics and the Gospel of the Apostles.<sup>1</sup> He has indeed recently somewhat modified the sharpness of this antithesis by allowing that in the Christ thus painted before men in the Gospels there was an implicit germ of that faith which was afterwards to see in Him "Lord and God." But in truth the antithesis was never felt in the early Church at all, and this very fact might have made him question the historical reality of it.

In point of fact, Christ had to begin by teaching men what God was, why they should love Him, and how this love was to be manifested. This was His first "healing message." It was, so to speak, the prophylactic remedy preparing for the other.

But no man can long follow after God in order to find Him and rest in His love without coming in contact with the great antagonist to such a search. This is sin, the sovereign malady of all our ills:—at once the result and the cause of our ignorance of God. Hence Christ came to reveal not only a loving God but a forgiving God. At first He dwelt on the freeness and fullness of that forgiveness, but as time went on He gave hints as to the cost that such a forgiveness might mean to Himself. He spoke of His life as the "ransom" paid for man's redemption.

He likened Himself to the corn of wheat dying in the earth, and at the Last Supper spoke of His body broken and His blood shed—as the Paschal Lamb of God—for the redemption of sinners. It was not, however, possible that before His death He could unfold to His disciples its full meaning. They would not have been able to bear it, for

<sup>1</sup> *Das Wesen des Christentums*, p. 91; also *Die Ausbreitung des Christentums*, Eng. tr., vol. i. p. 47.

one thing; and for another, it would have been an anachronism so to forestall the teaching of that Divine Spirit He promised to send them.

There is therefore truth as well as beauty in Dale's well-known saying that "Christ came not so much to preach the Gospel as that there might be a Gospel to preach." It was only after His passion that the full meaning of faith in Him could be known. It shaped itself then in the minds not merely of the master intellects of the Church but of many of its humbler teachers, such as Philip the Evangelist, into a believing *in Him*<sup>1</sup> as the Divine Priest who had offered up the great sacrifice for sin—the Sacrifice of Himself—and thus revealed to men not merely a God of love, but a God of righteous love; not merely a Father, but a "holy Father."

Thus in the apostolic preaching the Imitational view of faith, while not forgotten, is largely superseded by the Evangelical. It is now not so much Follow Christ as Believe in Christ. Rest on Him as your ground of acceptance with God. Love Him, and by so doing you will naturally follow Him.

The distinction of these two views of faith—the Imitational and the Evangelical—is, however, worth remembering, because it is not merely a temporary phase in the history of the Church. It has a validity for us to-day. There are two ways in which Christ may come to the soul still. He may come with His first word, "*Follow Me*"; or He may come with the second, "*Believe in Me*."

There has often been a tendency to set these in antagonism. Much of the inwardness of the Reformation struggle about the nature of justifying faith was due to such a false antagonism. The Catholic theologians fell back on the Christ of the Synoptic Gospels. Faith, they said, must begin with a *following*, else it is dead. The Reformed theologians again said, No! faith must first of all be a *resting* on Him alone, else it is impure.

Spiritual Medicine would suggest an Irenicon to all

<sup>1</sup> The preposition is transitive (*eis*), meaning "into Him."



such misunderstanding by pointing out that Christ will come to different souls differently, according to their special need. Thus there is a time when the soul is best fitted to listen to the simple message first heard in Galilee, "Follow Me," "Learn of Me." It is so, *e.g.*, with the young and the innocent. It is so with those also who have no deep experience of sin and no intellectual capacity for theology.

The Rev. Campbell Moody, a Chinese missionary, in an interesting psychological analysis of "the heathen heart," points out that the Chinese convert's faith is largely legalistic. It more resembles the faith of the sub-Apostolic than of the Apostolic Church; for it is interesting to note that though the earliest Christian Church was strongly "evangelical" in its view of faith, the later Christians of the ante-Nicene period went back to the Christ of the Gospels and drew their inspiration for a holy life from an imitation of Him in His life and death. It is so specially with the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" and St. Clement.

"If you ask a Chinese Christian," says Mr. Moody, "how one is saved, the usual answer is, that a man cannot do good of himself; he must trust in Christ for strength to live a good life, and in this way hope to be saved or have his sins forgiven. If we inquire further, 'What did Christ come to do?' someone rises to answer, 'He came to teach us.' To teach us what? 'To teach us to worship God,' is the prompt reply.

"Some other Christian is able to tell us that Christ came to save us. How does He save? 'By His almighty power.' Or perhaps we can extort the answer, 'He died for our sins'; but the meaning of these words remains unexplained. There is no clear idea of justification by faith alone. The idea is as foreign to Chinese Christians as it was to Christians of the first three centuries. It is very difficult to get at the Chinese notion of the forgiveness of sins; or rather, no precise notion is discoverable. The tendency is to take it for granted that a man who

observes the Sabbath and lives a blameless life will go to heaven. In fact," he concludes, "one must not think of Protestant Europe in the twentieth century but of the Roman Empire of the ante-Nicene period, as its Christian life is unconsciously presented by the Fathers, or in the well-known 'Teaching of the Twelve Apostles.'"<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Moody is evidently disappointed with the religious attainments of his Chinese converts, though he heartily admires their noble lives and simple pieties. But it may be asked, Is the normal standard of faith in many European Christians much higher? For our part, we cannot help thinking that there are multitudes of "ante-Nicene Christians" in all our churches, men who have hardly got beyond a conception of faith essentially the same as the Chinese one—that "Christianity is living a good life by the help of Christ."

In other days such "legalists" would have received short shrift at the hands of their more advanced Evangelical brethren. They would have been dismissed to the place that "Ignorance" was sent to by Bunyan with so little compunction. But in our day we have come to see things differently and more charitably. We see that a faith "which works by love" is a real vital faith though it cannot give an intellectually satisfying account of itself, and we see too that a man may begin by "following" who will end in "resting"; just as others begin by "resting" and end in "following."

It is noteworthy that the two greatest religious classics of the Church take these two contrasted but surely not contradictory aspects of the Christian faith. Thomas à Kempis with his very title emphasizes the Imitational side of faith, but he never thinks of denying the value of the Cross as an atonement in its fullest evangelical sense. His following is so feeble and so halting that at the end it can only lay hold on the strong arms of the Cross to bear it up.

With Bunyan's Pilgrim, again, the Cross is set in the

<sup>1</sup> *The Heathen Heart*, by Rev. C. N. Moody, M.A., p. 127 ff.

forefront of all. The great burden on Christian's back symbolizes the one thing he needs most of all. *Forgiveness* and the vision of the Cross is valued for this supremely, that "it loosed the burden off his back." But none the less does Bunyan emphasize the need of following Christ. His "Progress" *begins in a resting and ends in a following*—Thomas à Kempis *begins in a following and ends in a resting*.

The same types of Christian experience are found to-day. The young, the innocent, the "once-born" come to Christ first in His message—to *follow, learn and trust*. But by and by, as they get older and feel the power of sin more, they learn to value the deeper truth that Christ was lifted up not merely as an Example to follow, but as an Atonement to believe in, as their Sacrifice and Substitute. With the old and sin-stained soul, again, the experience is reversed. They begin where the Pilgrim began, at the Cross; but if their faith is real, they do not end there. The love of Christ constrains them to live "no longer unto themselves but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again."<sup>1</sup>

The chief point is that Christ in His entirety—both as *Physician and Medicine*—must be accepted before the full work of salvation can be perfected. As to the order in which these two aspects of His saving work may be experienced, there is no importance. It depends, as we shall see, largely on questions of age, environment and temperament. The important thing is that Christ is the Way to God, and that it is only those "who *by Him* do believe in God"<sup>2</sup> that can become partakers of eternal life as the Gospel offers it.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. i. 21.



## CHAPTER II

### THE FAITH OF LITTLE CHILDREN— PREVENTIVE SPIRITUAL MEDICINE

I N the previous chapter we were considering the “Imitational” and the “Conversional” methods of Faith. We saw that the first was suited to those who by their years and training were not deeply experienced with sin as a malady of the heart and a burden on the conscience. We have an illustration of this in the period to which we have now come—the faith of little children. We may call this a chapter in preventive spiritual medicine inasmuch as its great ideal is to prevent the outbreak of sin as a great malady in the character and life. On the other hand, it would be untrue to regard it as merely preventive. A true estimate of childhood recognizes its sins and failings to be as real as those of mature years. It has therefore to deal not only with the prevention but also with the cure of those who are still “babes in Christ.”

There are few questions indeed on which clear thinking is more to be desired than that of Christian Nurture. Christian Pædagogy has made much progress in regard to the methods of Sunday-school teaching, but as to the content of that teaching there is still not a little confusion. This is largely due to the changed attitude of the Church to-day to the Christian child.

According to the mediæval view, every child as he entered the world was “dead in trespasses and sins.” Hence the need of Baptismal Regeneration, without which no child could be saved. In the Reformed Church this doctrine was generally rejected or modified ; nevertheless,

its basal conception, that infants were by nature "children of wrath," was retained. There was only one way, according to the Evangelical Church, by which this condition could be altered, and that was conversion. To this experience the whole of Christian education was directed. It was simply a forcing process to that end. In earlier ages the motive was generally fear. The child was led to believe he was not "safe" till he was consciously converted. A Damoclean sword was hanging over his head by a thread which death might at any moment cut.

Of course the severity of this treatment varied with the temper of the parents. The Reformers were in this, as in so many other cases, more liberal than their immediate successors. The humanness of Luther's attitude to his children is well known. Even the sternness of Calvin's views of total depravity is mitigated by the idea of unconscious regeneration. "Christ was sanctified from His earliest infancy, that He might sanctify in Himself all the elect. But how, it may be asked, are infants regenerated, who have no knowledge of good or evil? We reply that the work of God is not without existence because it is not observed or understood by us. Now it is certain that some infants are saved, and that they are previously regenerated is beyond all doubt. They are baptized into future repentance and faith; for though these graces have not yet been formed in them, the seeds of both are nevertheless implanted in their hearts by the secret operations of the Spirit."<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, such "secret operations" were at best a matter of pious hope after the dawn of intelligence. Hence every nerve was strained by the pious parent to make them conscious and active as life went on. Thus Dr. Coe remarks about the training of the young in America in the beginning of last century: "The notion of depravity was the core of the accepted notion of man, children included. The need for religion and the motive of piety were found in the thought of sin. In 1831 the

<sup>1</sup> *Institutes of Theology*, ch. xvi,

American Tract Society published a volume of *Persuasives to Early Piety*. The book sets out by telling the young reader how depraved he is. This depravity does not infect merely a part of us, but, like a mortal poison, pollutes the whole. As a consequence, the first foundation of piety is such a sense of loathsomeness as drives us to accept the plan of salvation. Setting out thus, the book naturally ends with a frightful description of hell fire.

“Such assumptions led to training by repression, not by self-expression. Negative rather than positive motives were appealed to. A collection of hymns for children published as late as 1852 contains such advice as this :

‘ Little children, stop and think ;  
Turn away from ruin’s brink.’”<sup>1</sup>

That such training produced noble characters when successful cannot be doubted. The very anxiety it awakened was often beneficial to thought and character. But, on the other hand, it alienated others. A striking example is found in Mr. Gosse’s painful autobiography, *Father and Son*.<sup>2</sup> The bitter note of Charles Dickens and even Charlotte Brontë in regard to Evangelicalism is also probably due to it.

It cannot be said that the Church has quite broken even yet with this attitude to the child. Some “children’s evangelists” go about with this as part of their stock-in-trade, and labour to produce “conversions” by teaching not essentially different.

<sup>1</sup> *The Religion of a Mature Mind*, by Albert Coe, D.D., p. 314.

<sup>2</sup> At his father’s earnest persuasion, the subject of this sad story got “converted” and joined the Plymouth Brethren when quite a boy ; but growing years and a broadening intelligence revolted against the narrowness of his creed, and a painful breach between him and his father took place—all the sadder because of the love and veneration with which he regarded him. “After long experience,” he concludes, “I have surely the right to protest against the untruth that Evangelical Religion is a wholesome adjunct to human life. It divides heart from heart. It sets up a vain and chimerical ideal, in the pursuit of which all the tender indulgent feelings, all the genuine play of life . . . all that enlarges and calms the soul, are exchanged for what is harsh, void, and negative.”—*Father and Son*, published anonymously, but the authorship is an open secret.



Since the middle of last century, however, a new view of Christian childhood has been slowly gaining possession of the Church. While the doctrine of "original sin" is not denied, it is sharply distinguished from that of "total depravity." The infant is not to be regarded as "a little devil hanging on his mother's breast." On the contrary, he comes "trailing clouds of glory from God, who is his home." Hence the ideal of education is not how to *repress* his instincts but rather to *express* them in an atmosphere of love and purity. Without any cataclysmic experience, such a child should grow into a child of God almost unconsciously. In the epigram of Dr. Coe, the ideal is now "Salvation by Education."

The forces that have led to this change are many. Dr. Coe sets it down largely to the influence of Horace Bushnell, who in his fine treatise on *Christian Nurture* lays it down as his foundation thought that "*the child is to grow up a Christian, and never know himself to be otherwise.*"<sup>1</sup>

But while Bushnell was the first to bring these thoughts before the mind of the Church, it cannot be said he was their author. Perhaps the true pioneer of the change was Rousseau. In his *Emile* he showed himself the first of the moderns to appreciate the child in his purity and poetry. To him the infant as he comes from the Creator's hands is a perfect piece of workmanship which man at once begins to spoil. The poets imbibed his thoughts greedily. Wordsworth in particular attributes to the infant divine intuitions derived from a pre-natal existence:

"Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home."<sup>2</sup>

Charles Dickens gave popularity to the same view, in his somewhat sentimental pictures of "Little Nell" and "Paul

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Nurture*, English edition, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> "Ode to Immortality."

Dombey," while the Broad Church theologians took up the thought and gave it a habitation in the Church of England. Robertson held Baptism to be only a declaratory act, "proclaiming, not making, the child a son of God"; and the same was the view of Maurice and Stanley and Kingsley.

The movement has been carried further than perhaps most of its authors would approve of, by Mr. A. F. Tennant, who in his *Origin and Propagation of Sin* declares the doctrine of "Original Sin" to have no place either in ancient Scripture or in modern Science. The universality of sin he explains by the conflict which takes place in man between "the Ape and the Tiger" in his physico-spiritual nature. With Weissmann he denies that there is any such thing as a hereditary transmission of acquired qualities and, as sin is something acquired, it cannot be transmitted.<sup>1</sup>

This is not Bushnell's view. He sees in "Heredity" a powerful confirmation of the truth that we were "shapen in iniquity," but he holds that along with the seeds of evil there are also the seeds of good in our nature. What true "Christian nurture" has to do is to repress the evil and develop the good.

Such are the two conflicting ideals of Christian Pædagogy, which to-day still produce confusion in the mind of the Sunday-school teacher and perplexity in that of his pupils. To which of these does the remedial conception of salvation incline? Its attitude may throw light on the difficulties the loyal disciple of Christ has in accepting one of these ideals to the exclusion of the other.

For, on the one hand, he feels the modern view is *in sympathy with much of Christ's attitude to little children*. Such words as "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven,"<sup>2</sup> "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in

<sup>1</sup> *The Origin and Propagation of Sin*, by A. F. Tennant.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xix. 14.

no wise enter the kingdom of heaven,"<sup>1</sup> seem to argue if not the innocence of little children at least their essential goodness.

On the other hand, it is as possible to minimize the goodness as it is to exaggerate the original sinfulness of childhood. We have already seen<sup>2</sup> that the diseases of egoism—anger, jealousy and dishonesty—make their appearance at the very dawn of intelligence, though then they do not amount to full depravity.

More serious still is the teaching of Jesus on the necessity of a new birth. "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God."<sup>3</sup> It is true, as Dr. Coe remarks, that what Jesus actually said was probably not "born anew," but "born from above"; and this is more than a mere verbal change, "pointing rather to a gradual renewal of the life than to an instantaneous re-creation of it at a definite time. We have caused men to ask—'Have I been born again?' 'Am I sure the event has taken place?' Whereas we should have pressed home the sharp contrast between a spiritual and unspiritual quality of life. 'What am I, qualitatively considered?' 'Am I living the life that is from above, or that which is from below?'"<sup>4</sup>

Still, with that modification there is surely here something more required than education; something also of eradication and re-creation; the eradication of an evil principle and the creation of a good one. St. Paul is in this matter in complete accordance with the Johannine Gospel. "If any man is in Christ," he says, "he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new."<sup>5</sup> To him the moral dualism between the flesh and spirit in the natural man can only be victoriously overcome by the soul being filled with a divine energy akin to that with which Christ rose victorious over death.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> John iii. 3.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter III.

<sup>4</sup> *Religion of a Mature Mind*, pp. 206-8.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. vii. and Eph. i. 19, 20.



Scripture and Psychology thus unite in pointing to something more than salvation by education as being needed to solve the problems of Christian nurture. Is not this supplied by what we have called the Imitational method of faith? In the First Part we saw that the origin of soul-sickness was a tainted heredity.<sup>1</sup> This, however, could only be aroused into actual disease by a tainted environment. A tainted organism acted on by a tainted atmosphere was found to be the true "etiology" of sin. Now this points to the true treatment of the child. No doubt he carries with him into the world the seeds of eternal life. No doubt, in the sweet unconscious purity of childhood, he does come "trailing clouds of glory." Nevertheless, along with this divine element, there is, as the most impartial psychologists admit, a taint of ancestry, "a defect of blood." This hereditary bias to evil needs, however, an evil atmosphere to educe it into active forms of vice. And the first part of the training of a child must therefore be one of "atmosphere." The atmosphere must be one of love, purity, and above all reverence. In order to attain this, there must, as we have said, be a certain social amenity in the homes of the people.

But no matter how good the atmosphere is, something more is needed to counteract the germs of evil and develop those of goodness. And this is best found in the inculcation of religious truth, through the Imitational method of faith. For there is no atmosphere perfectly pure in this world, and unless the spiritual blood is fed with wholesome religious truth, the seeds of evil will make their appearance in the most comfortable and refined home.

Such an "Imitational" method of faith differs in no essential way from what Dr. Coe calls "Salvation by Education." For he uses the word "education" in a broad sense. "We must," he says, "understand education in no narrow sense. We may exercise one muscle while we permit another to atrophy, and just so we may train some

<sup>1</sup> Chapter III.

of our faculties while others lie dormant, and this we mistake for education. But when education is taken in the profound sense of bringing to expression that which is deepest in man, then it becomes a means of making him conscious of God in Whom he lives and moves and has his being. Such training can begin with infancy, and it can be continued till old age. It can and does bring man to the obedient recognition of God as the supreme reality, and Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. That is salvation by education.”<sup>1</sup>

If this is salvation by education, we have no quarrel with the phrase. Only we must remember that by it we include all that is meant in Christ’s word “regeneration.” We must recognize that in the child we are thus educating there are germs of evil to be repressed and that these can only be killed by the expulsive power of the new affection gradually taking hold of the young heart and filling it with the new life which is in Christ. Just as the germs of evil in the blood can only be overcome by the phagocytes which healthy blood creates to fight them, so the germs of sin in the tainted soul can only be effectively dealt with by a spiritual inflow of the Divine life into the heart through the channel of faith.

But that inflow can best be accomplished by the method of the Imitation of Christ. Let the child be taught to follow and love the Christ of Galilee and Calvary as his best and truest Friend. Let him be taught to pray to Him for strength to fulfil his best intentions. Let him not be puzzled with questions as to the need of conviction of sin and mysteries of justification by faith alone, but let him be taught that, in the words of Mrs. Alexander’s beautiful hymn,

“He died that we might be forgiven,  
He died to make us good ;  
That we might go at last to heaven,  
Saved by His precious blood,”

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<sup>1</sup> *Religion of a Mature Mind*, p. 320.

and the work of regeneration will be accomplished naturally, and often unconsciously, without any cataclysmic experiences.

We confess we do not like the word "conversion" used in regard to a child. We agree with Dr. Cutten that that word is used by Christ "not as a turning from the state of childhood but as a turning to it," and that in His reference to it He "puts adults and children into two distinct classes, and emphatically says that adults are so different from them that they would have to be converted to become as children again."<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, we are far from denying that in a child's Imitation of Christ there may not be solemn acts of decision which have all the force of conversion. A distinguished Professor of Theology once told me that the deepest religious experience of his childhood came to him through a simple decision in one solemn moment to be true at all hazards. This developed into a determination to be sincere in everything he thought and wrote, and he regarded it as the most important factor in his life. Bushnell accepts the possibility of such "conversional crises" taking place in many if not most spiritual evolutions. All he contends for is that they should come naturally, that they should not be forced, and that such crises should not be looked on as dividing lines in life, before which the child must be regarded as "unsaved" and after which he is "born again." Regeneration is not conversion. Conversion may be a part of regeneration, but it is not an essential one. The divine work of renewal may be and often is as gradual as the dawn, and to attempt to draw a dividing line through it, one side of which is death and the other is life, is not only untrue to the facts of Christian experience but is a libel on the creating act of God, according to which He made man in His own image—an image which, though blurred by sin, is never regarded as wholly lost in this life.

To quote Bushnell once again. "The ideal teaching

<sup>1</sup> Cutten's *Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*, p. 269.



of the young should be that which feeds a growth and not stirs a revolt. It is a delicate matter for children to navigate the rough sea of conversional tossings. There is for the little ones a more quiet way of induction. Show them the good, and then, when they fail, how God will help them when they ask Him. In this way they will have little conversional crises all the time.”<sup>1</sup>

The danger of forcing upon the young mind experiences which are not natural to it is well described by another American writer, Dr. Tiersch. “It is,” he says, “certainly not difficult to bring a child into a condition of emotion and anxiety, and by representations of his natural corruption to fill him with doubts of his own salvation; thereby moving him to anything that may be desired. It is possible that by these means deep experiences of the soul have been brought to light. But these are consequences that should be rather objects of our fear than of our rejoicing. For here comes in the worst of all dangers, the early wasting of such impressions and experiences and a creeping in of untruth when the power vanishes and the forms of speech remain.”<sup>2</sup>

Our experience of children’s “revivals” confirms the general truth of these words. While, as we have already remarked, the conversional method of training a child has often produced noble results, we must say it has more often produced the reverse and led to “experiences” which after years proved illusory and even totally destructive to faith.

We conclude, then, that the Imitational method is the wisest to use with little children. This is in harmony with the well-known power of the child to imitate what it loves. Its “whole vocation,” as the poet says, “is endless imitation.” What more suitable than that the religious teacher should lay hold of this natural gift and make it the opportunity of faith? In saying this we are very far from discrediting the reality of “conversion” in after years. Rather would we conserve that great word for

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Nurture*, p. 249.

<sup>2</sup> *Christian Family*, p. 153.

those experiences which come naturally to the soul in its conflict with sin and sorrow. Of these we shall speak in the succeeding chapters. Meanwhile we may point out that this is practically the method which now obtains in most of the Evangelical Churches. If the ministers of these churches were questioned about the experiences of those who come forward under their instruction to "join the Church," I believe that the greater part would testify that the majority of their catechumens can point to no conscious conversion. They come to the Lord's Table under the influence of a faith so gently persuasive in its dawn and development that they could point to no time when they did not "love the Lord."

We ourselves took the trouble to keep a private record of our interviews with those who joined a certain church during the ten years when we were acting as its pastor. During that time the number of those who joined by profession was three hundred and eighty-one. No stereotyped questions were put to them, but the minister had a private talk with them all, and anything that was of note in their religious experience usually came out. We mention this because, though the "Questionnaires" drawn up by Professors Starbuck and Coe are interesting and instructive, they sometimes, we think, tend to create the answers they wish only to elicit. In these interviews, on the other hand, there was nothing artificial. The talk was not meant to fill schedules but to guide souls; but one question was never omitted: "Have you had any conscious experience of conversion?"

Analysing these records, we find that *only forty-eight* professed to have passed through such an experience—that is, *thirteen per cent.* Seventeen had an experience of doubt and gradual illumination. Twenty-six spoke of having their faith deepened by sorrow. Twenty-six pointed to the influence of their teacher in the Sunday school as the most notable thing in their religious history.

Of course there may have been one or two who were too reticent to tell anything, but on the whole we found



that those who had something to say were the most ready to say it. Here, then, we have the striking fact that in a large and healthy Evangelical church in a Scotch city—a church teeming with life—the “conversion” column was only represented by thirteen per cent.

No doubt some will deduce from statistics of these kinds the deadness of the church and the ministry. We can only answer to such a criticism that the pastor of that church had an experience in his own youth that made him far from unsympathetic to youthful conversions. Nor was it the case that those who could point to such crises were always the best. They were usually the easiest to talk to; but often it was the most reticent that proved afterwards the most permanent. Still waters run deep, and those who had the deepest love to Christ, as they showed by their after life, had often the least to say about it. On the whole, the difference between these cases was one of *temperament* rather than *vitality*; the emotional or Celtic type tending to conversional experiences, while the phlegmatic or Saxon inclined to imitational.

The general conclusion we come to is this: that no type of early piety should seek to invalidate the other, but that, in our age at least, the most natural method of instilling religion into the young mind is by leading it to an Imitation of Christ not only as our Divine Example but as our Divine Saviour, who can help us to follow and reproduce in ourselves that which we have learned to prize and love in Him. Such an “Imitation” may and often does lead, as we have said, to cataclysms of conviction and faith which are so quickening to the soul that it is tempted to regard all that went before as merely spiritual death. But, on the other hand, it may not do so, and those who have such experiences should not judge those who have them not. There are, as Francis Newman has truly said, “once-born children of God.” They have been truly born from above, but they can point to no definite experience of a second birth. Having never left the Father’s House for the “far country,” they do not



know the sweetness of the prodigal's return; but they know the riches of the Father's promise: "Son, thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine."

Dr. Dale gives us an example of a wise catholicity in appraising both these types of early piety. In an article on the "Relation of Children to the Church," he says: "There are not a few who can testify that from their childhood they knew, not the Scriptures only but God Himself. They came to know Him they cannot tell how: they knew Him just as they knew the blue sky or their mother's love. They knew Him before they could understand any name by which, in our imperfect human speech, we have endeavoured to affirm His goodness, His power, or His glory."<sup>1</sup>

Yet it was the same writer who, when Mr. Moody's Revival visited the city of Birmingham a year or two later, did not hesitate to say, after a personal experience of the work: "I hardly know how to express the change that has passed over them"—the young converts. "It is like the change which comes upon the landscape when clouds, which have been hanging over it for hours, suddenly vanish and the sunlight seems to fill both heaven and earth. There is a joyousness and an elasticity of spirit and a hopefulness which have completely transformed them."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Article in *The Congregationalist*, 1873.

<sup>2</sup> *The Congregationalist*, 1875.

## CHAPTER III

### CONVERSION BY CRISIS

FROM the previous chapter, it might appear that there is no room for a "conversion" in the ideal Christian experience. This, no doubt, is the view of some. The writer has heard a preacher say in an Evangelical church, that "we should pray God that the time may come when the word 'conversion' would never be heard in a Christian pulpit—because there was no need for it."

If this means that we should pray for the Millennium, it is a pious aspiration; but if it applies to things as they are, or are likely to be for many generations, it goes to an extremity of error as pernicious as that which it condemns. We may pray for the time when sanitation will shut up every ward in the hospital except that for senile decay, but at present we have most need to pray that hospitals may be supported and extended.

And the Christian Church to-day is a hospital as well as a home. It is a Bethesda in whose porches are multitudes of sick folk. Instead of conversion being never heard of in our churches to-day, it should be more heard of. The preacher should realize that his audience is not merely a household of faith, but an infirmary of sick souls.

We thus come to deal with "conversion"—a great word in Christian experience, and one so full of interest psychologically that many "Psychologies of Religion" deal with little else. This is a mistake; but it is a better one than the old supercilious attitude of Philosophy to it: "Neurasthenia followed by fanatical enthusiasm." For conversion is in truth a great experience, if not "the sovereign fact and

glory of religion,"<sup>1</sup> and it cannot be neglected in any worthy account of the spiritual life.

What, then, is conversion? It has been very variously defined: as "a change of intention";<sup>2</sup> "an experience in which the rationalistic features fall off and the suppressed hypnotic centres explode with immense satisfaction";<sup>3</sup> "an overpowering impression on the mind, that supplies a new and energetic motive to the will";<sup>4</sup> the inhibition of lower centres of nervous discharge, through the establishment of higher connections and identification of the Ego with new activities";<sup>5</sup> "the renewing of principles under the power of the Holy Ghost, which I had already felt when young";<sup>6</sup> "the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self, divided and consciously wrong, becomes unified and consciously right, superior, and happy";<sup>7</sup> "union of the mind and growth from a life of self to one of service."<sup>8</sup>

To these definitions we will venture to add a new one, which at least has the merit of clearness. We will call conversion "*the favourable turn in the disease of sin.*" It denotes that period when the maleficent forces of evil, naturally resident in human nature, called into activity by the defects of Christian nurture or the poisonous environment of the world, receive, more or less suddenly, a powerful check by the reception and working within the soul of a new principle of life.

Such an experience may of course take place more than once. It may happen whenever there is a recrudescence of sin in the life and a victorious resurgence of the spiritual forces against it. Many deny that a man can be truly converted more than once. This is due to a confusion of conversion and regeneration. Of course the latter can

<sup>1</sup> Jackson, *The Fact of Conversion*.

<sup>2</sup> Frank Granger, *Soul of a Christian*, p. 77.

<sup>3</sup> Ellis, *Man and Woman*, p. 292.

<sup>4</sup> Bain, *Emotions and the Will*, p. 453.

<sup>5</sup> Starbuck, *Psychology of Religion*, p. 156.

<sup>6</sup> J. H. Newman, *Correspondence*, p. 122.

<sup>7</sup> Professor James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 169.

<sup>8</sup> Cutten, *Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*, p. 254.



only happen once. But conversion may take place many times; though the more often it does so, the less likely is it to be salutary in its effects. St. Peter, however, was converted twice. It will hardly be denied he experienced a true "change of intention" when he left all and followed Christ, and it is as certain he was converted a second time when he "went out and wept bitterly." So at least Christ regarded it.<sup>1</sup> The fact is we cannot always divide life into a converted and unconverted state. We may do so with a Paul; we cannot with a Peter, and still less with a John.

Another error our definition guards us from is that of confining conversion to adolescence. A man may have a dangerous disease at any time and a favourable crisis therein. So with conversion. We have already referred to this; but we do so again, because the view of Professor Starbuck that "if conversion is not experienced before twenty, the chances are it will never be experienced at all," has pernicious results.

As Dr. Steven says, "If people come to know that their hope of salvation decreases after twenty and that they are practically hopeless after forty, then the expectation will fulfil itself. . . . Another result is much more serious: the preaching will be adapted solely to adolescents. The preacher's appeal and his general methods will be such as move the young, and his purpose will be to bring about a crisis."<sup>2</sup>

Of course, if the facts were so, we should have to face such a danger. But are the facts so? We have already pointed out that some of the greatest conversions in history were those of men in mid-life. And though there are no statistics to preserve the record, we believe that there are no less numerous examples in humble and obscure places of the same thing, men in the midst of their days whose lives are thus deepened in their channel, or it may be diverted wholly into a new one, by the ordinary ministrations of the Gospel. "I believe," said a preacher truly, "in the converting power of edifying preaching."

<sup>1</sup> Luke. xxii. 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Psychology of the Christian Soul*, by Rev. Dr. G. Steven, p. 169.

The last point our definition suggests to us is that all conversions *are not necessarily sudden*. They may come by *Crisis*; but they may also come by *Lysis*. For medical treatment has marked off these two different methods by which recovery may take place from a specific disease. In the former, the turn is sharp and without retrogression. The temperature suddenly falls, sleep ensues, and the patient awakes feeling he is "better." And so he usually is.

In "Lysis," again, the case is less satisfactory. There may be a remission of the dangerous symptoms, but this is only temporary. The temperature falls gradually towards the normal. The general condition improves; appetite returns, and what may be called "recovery by a wide turn" is made.

The same analogy is found in spiritual recovery from the attacks of sin; though of course the phenomena are more subtle and difficult to distinguish. In many cases, indeed, the "crisis" is unmistakable. This takes place in "instantaneous conversions," as they are called—a misnomer, if we mean by the phrase that all is the work of an instant; but a true description of what happens when forces hitherto working subconsciously explode with consciousness and change the life.

In other cases, again, the improvement is much more gradual. There may be a slow transformation of the whole mind and ideals. Or there may be more than one "conversional crisis," with intervals punctuated by serious relapses. From these, however, the soul recovers with a steady increase of "intention," rising "from stepping-stones of its dead self to higher things," until at last it passes out of the clutch of its master altogether.

The progress is almost entirely made in the field of consciousness. The sense of the supernatural is therefore not so clear; assurance is more slowly gained. There is also the danger lest the relapses which characterize some of its forms may become so serious as to imperil recovery altogether. Nevertheless, some of the greatest saints have

passed by this way into the Kingdom. We shall deal with the condition in a succeeding chapter. Meanwhile we consider the more direct one of "*Conversion by Crisis*."

This extraordinary phenomenon finds its classic example in St. Paul. The prominence of its subject, the earnestness of his previous antagonism to Jesus, the marvellous *volte-face* he made after his experience on the Damascus road, and the splendid services he afterwards rendered to the new faith—all made a profound impression on the Church's consciousness and was commemorated among her great festivals. It must not indeed be supposed that, though "instantaneous" in its manifestation, it was not preceded by secret workings in the subconsciousness. The "kicking against the goad" of which the voice from heaven speaks points to a period of previous unrest due doubtless to the impression made on the youthful persecutor by the death of Stephen. But when the change did take place, it came with a suddenness so unexpected that he spoke of it himself as an "arrest." He was "apprehended" like a thief and turned into a path totally different from that of his previous dreams. This unexpectedness made it seem to himself an act of "sovereign grace," and so has it ever since been regarded by the Church.

It had, as we have said, a commanding influence on the Christian heart, and though in the earlier days of the faith there were doubtless many who came to the truth by the unconscious call of Christ to the soul, multitudes must have been moved by it to seek for their entrance on the new life in such a definite experience. This was specially the case in the Post-Reformation Church, where a man's religious faith was open to grave suspicion if he could not point to an experience of the Pauline type. "When Count Zinzendorf assured the Moravian Church that he could not tell the day when he first decided for Christ, and had no knowledge of a time when he did not love Him,



he raised within the minds of the brethren the most serious misgivings.”<sup>1</sup>

This doubtless led gradually to a formalism and even hypocrisy in regard to such experiences which by and by brought the word into an unmerited contempt. All “conversions” came to be regarded by the non-evangelical especially as the outcome of fanaticism or cant.

Mark Rutherford’s *Autobiography* is an illustration of the discredit attaching to the word among the “illuminati” of the nineteenth century. “Conversion,” he says, “as it is now understood, is altogether unmeaning. I knew that I had to be a child of God, and after a time professed myself to be one; but I cannot call to mind that I was anything else than I had always been, save that I was perhaps a little more hypocritical. I was obliged to declare myself convinced of sin, convinced of the efficacy of the Atonement, convinced that the Holy Spirit was shed abroad in my heart, and convinced of a great many other things which were the merest phrases.”<sup>2</sup>

It is to the credit of the American psychologists that they have rescued this noble word from the waste-basket of philosophy and showed its true meaning, not to the Christian Church, for it had never quite lost it, but to the world of intellect and culture. The interest of the Americans was of course quite detached from religious considerations. “Conversion” came before them as a first-class psychological phenomenon. It was their duty to examine it, and they did so scientifically, not to discredit, but to estimate and if possible explain it. In so doing they raked all the stores of Christian biography, examined hundreds of professed “converts,” and though they no doubt made many errors due to a too hasty generalization, at least they established one thing—that conversion was no mere “phrase,” but on the contrary covered some of the most epoch-making experiences of life.

There is no need here to repeat the results of their

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology of the Christian Soul*, by G. Steven, D.D., p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> *Autobiography of Mark Rutherford*, p. 10.

work. Professor James has given an abundant selection of the most illustrious of them in his brilliant *Varieties of Religious Experience*; Starbuck, Lenba and Coe have carried the method into the common experiences of everyday religious life; and Mr. Harold Begbie has made it the text for a collection of stories of *Broken Earthenware*, whose literary completeness makes one sometimes dubious of their perfect authenticity.

But while Psychology has thus done a real service to Christianity in establishing the "fact of conversion," it may seem to many to have done a greater disservice to it by explaining away its miraculousness. For, as we have pointed out, one of the great evidences of a divine work in conversion was its unexpectedness. We have seen this in St. Paul. It is also noticeable in another famous case, that of Colonel Gardiner, the noble Covenanter who fell fighting at the battle of Prestonpans. He was living the life of a libertine in Paris, and had gone to a house there to keep an assignation, when he was suddenly "arrested" by a "vision" of Christ hanging on the Cross. He left the room dazed and stunned and, as it proved, an entirely changed man. All his ideals were purified, and especially the sensuality in which he had formerly lived became an abhorrence to him. The change in this respect was a continual wonder to himself. To a friend he said: "I was effectually cured of all inclination to that sin I was so strongly addicted to that I thought nothing but shooting me through the head could have cured me of it; and all desire and inclination to it was removed as entirely as if I had been a sucking child; nor did the temptation return to this day."<sup>1</sup>

A similar testimony is borne by a Highland minister, the Rev. Mr. Sage of Resolis. His wife had died with her first child, and under the blow faith and even reason reeled.

"I lay down wishing that I might die. Then Conscience began to ask, 'Why did I wish to die?' My

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Colonel James Gardiner*, by Philip Doddridge.

sorrows at once responded, 'Just to be with Harriet.' But was I so sure of that? If Harriet was in heaven, as I could not but hope she was, was nothing else to be the consequence of death but that I might go to be with her? I was struck dumb! So then, the only reason I wished to die was, not to be 'with Christ,' but to be with Harriet. As if Harriet without Christ could make happiness for me! This discovery threw me into a terrible state of despondency. I was perambulating the garden at the time. I betook me to my bedroom and threw myself on my knees to pray; but could not. My spirit was angry, proud, and unsubdued. God had deprived me of the object of my dearest affection. Not only so, but He had withdrawn the only source out of which I could draw strength. What a God I had to deal with then! How unlike me!

"But 'who is a God like unto Thee?' I became humbled. I made another attempt to pray. But all my sins stood out before me—the sins of my youth, my daily omissions and commissions. 'My own clothes abhorred me.' I flung myself on the floor, not to pray, for I deemed that useless; but to wait like a condemned criminal for an irrevocable sentence. I felt I deserved it, and was hardened to abide the result.

"But 'who is a God like unto Thee?' In the sovereignty of the Spirit's influence, that passage—'I am the door'—glided into my mind *without any previous attempt to get it*. Like a light dim at first it gradually brightened. I laid hold of 'the hope set before me.' If I may dare say, I did enter that door even then. At that solemn moment, notwithstanding outward bereavement, I experienced 'all joy and peace in believing.' I was enabled, without a murmur, to resign my beloved Harriet to His keeping. I returned to my friends in peace. My tranquillity astonished them, and they could not but ask the reason. I could only say, 'The Lord had given and the Lord had taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.'"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Memorabilia Domestica*, by the Rev. Donald Sage, M.A., pp. 359-361 (abridged).



It will be noted that the author's sense of the unexpectedness of the relief found leads him to refer it to the "Spirit's" influence. This has the authority of Jesus Himself. "The wind bloweth where it listeth. . . . Thou knowest not whence it cometh. . . . So is every one that is born of the Spirit."<sup>1</sup>

Modern Psychology does not deny the possibility of a divine influence in conversion. On the contrary, many of its teachers favour it. "The mistake," says Dr. Cutten, "is frequently made of holding that if we have explained the way in which the mind operates in conversion, we have thereby eliminated the divine element. As well might we say, when we have described a law of nature, we have therefore proved that nature requires no power to operate the elements which conform to this law, or that when we know how the machine works, it needs no power to operate it."<sup>2</sup>

At the same time Psychology does destroy *the mystery of conversion*; or at least it pushes back that mystery, taking away much of its wonder and unexpectedness, though not, as we shall see, without giving many compensations for the loss in an increased credibility of the phenomena and some practical hints as to where they may be expected and even in part produced.

This it does by its doctrine of the *Unconscious* or *Subliminal Self*, to the movements of which it points for the explanation of conversion. The doctrine of another and deeper self working below the field of consciousness, and yet powerfully influencing it all the time, has been described by Professor James "as the most important step forward in Psychology since I have been a student of that science."<sup>3</sup> For the benefit of those who desire a fuller account of it, we refer our readers to Note B at the end of this volume. Here we dwell only upon it as an explanation of conversion.

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Cutten, *Psychological Elements of Christianity*, p. 260.

<sup>3</sup> *Varieties*, p. 233.

What the doctrine of the subconscious teaches in regard to sudden conversions is, in fact, that they are not sudden at all. It shows them to be the result of a long incubation of motives and thoughts which has taken place in the soul unknown to its possessor. This deeper self is partly the product of heredity. It is due to the transmission into it of thoughts and feelings received from our parents, our education, our environment. Every day, indeed, impulses are passing into it. They pass through our consciousness into the "abysmal depths of personality." There they are half forgotten by their possessor, and may seem to have no influence upon him until they are forcibly dragged to the surface by the effort of recollection. But they are not really at rest. They are always in some degree of activity, forming combinations like crystals in chemical affinity and tending from time to time to exert an influence on the conscious life of their possessor. That influence is seen in those instincts and intuitions which often come to us we know not how, but have always a powerful effect upon us. Hence the proverb, "Intuitions are better than thoughts."

This influence of the subconscious is, however, always liable to inhibition by the conscious self. Its suggestions may be frustrated by those "second thoughts" which are the fruit of reason and reflection. Hence there may come a conflict between the conscious and the unconscious in our life. The conscious may be on the side of good, the unconscious may incline to evil. Or, perhaps more commonly, the conscious may be biased by evil inclinations, while the deep-seated feelings of the heart may lie towards God. "When he came *to himself* he said . . . I will arise and go to my Father."<sup>1</sup>

When this conflict becomes acute there arises a painful dualism in the life, such as Paul outlines in Romans vii. R. L. Stevenson has given us a vivid allegory of it in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The soul is sick, longing to be free and yet unable to be free; crying,

<sup>1</sup> Luke xv. 17, 18.

"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

It is here that the value of a "conversion" comes in. Let some powerful influence find its way into the subconscious and it may so excite these hidden elements that they may suddenly explode, as it were, into the man's conscious life, overturn all resistance there, and carry the will forward on a new path of life.

This is what took place in Paul's soul when the great light smote him to the ground and showed him Jesus at the right hand of God. It was not, we need hardly say, the Voice alone which changed all his ideals in a moment. That was but the spark falling on a mine long prepared in the subconscious self and bursting with shattering effects on his previous conceptions of divine truth.

Such an impulse comes still, if in less seemingly miraculous ways. A great sorrow, the magnetic influence of a speaker in a great meeting, the "psychology" of the crowd, the earnest appeal of a friend, even the quiet messages of nature may effect it. But it is not this that converts. It is only the spark falling on the elements prepared for a rapid conflagration in the deeper centres of man's being.

That this is a true account of what takes place in most if not all instantaneous conversions is proved first of all by the fact that most of these occur in souls of a definite type of temperament—one of an emotional type and liable to such outbursts; and secondly, that in all those in which the subconscious may be supposed to play a part conversion is of the "surrender" type—it takes place by the yielding up of the will to God.

As regards the influence of temperament, religious psychologists have pointed out, I think indisputably, that there are certain types of mind where the connection between the conscious and the unconscious is very close. The subliminal line is "leaky." The field of consciousness is more open to invasion from the subconscious. It is in these that sudden conversions are most to be expected. Thus Dr. Coe, in an examination of seventy-three cases of



sudden conversion, finds that in 70 per cent. sensibility predominates over will, while only 12 per cent. can be called intellectual. Further, 70 per cent. are of a sanguine or melancholy temperament, while 30 per cent. are phlegmatic or choleric. In short, the conversional type of temperament is emotional, open to impulses from the subconscious.

The other confirmation of subconscious action in conversion is to be seen in the fact that it usually takes place when the soul *gets into a passive state of self-surrender*. Of course, as Professor James says, there are conversions of the active type, where the soul says, consciously, "Now then! I will believe"; but these are more often found in conversion by Lysis or the protracted type. What usually happens in instantaneous conversion is this—the man is, as it were, felled to the ground. Like Mr. Sage, he lies prostrate there in abject weakness or self-abasement, all his props gone, expecting nothing, giving up the struggle. Then, when effort is thus given up, there suddenly glides into the mind some text or thought or resolution, which gives it new hope. In a moment some tension breaks, the soul realizes it has touched bed-rock, and relief ensues.

What has happened is that the subconscious self has been allowed to act. By giving up the conscious striving which has produced only weariness, the deep forces within have welled up into the conscious life and brought peace and unity.

We see an illustration of it on a smaller scale in what takes place when one who has wrestled unsuccessfully with a problem or speech or sermon says to himself, "I'll let it go for the time and sleep over it," and finds next morning that the problem has solved itself, the sermon seems to write itself; not, as he may think,<sup>1</sup> because he has rested and is refreshed, but because the subconscious has been at work on it. In letting ourselves go, we fall into the arms of the subconscious, and find them to be the arms of God.

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes the problem is solved in sleep. See Note B.

Wordsworth has pointed out that a similar result takes place in yielding with "a quiet passiveness to the influences of Nature." In his reply to the "expostulations" of those who quarrelled with him for not entering more actively into the pursuits of his fellows, he says:

"Nor less I deem that there are powers  
Which *of themselves our minds impress* ;  
That we can feed this mind of ours  
*In a wise passiveness.*

Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum  
Of things for ever speaking,  
That *nothing of itself will come*,  
But we must still be seeking?"<sup>1</sup>

There is a "wise passiveness" in conversion, for it is then that the soul gives the opportunity to those powers "which of themselves our minds impress," and that "something" comes the best when we are not consciously "seeking" it.

But of course there must have been the previous preparation in the subconscious life. That is proved by the fact that when the "great change" comes it brings with it *nothing intellectually new*. Thus in the case of Mr. Sage, the language he uses, the theology he reverts to is that which he had previously received in his Highland home.

The same is true of St. Paul. The "Son" which was "revealed in him" on the Damascus journey was in no essential different from the Jesus of Peter or John or Philip or Stephen. He carried the revelation indeed to a more vigorous and thorough development by the reflection upon it which was suggested by a great mind; but as Dr. Denney has reminded us, all the leaders of the Church are at one in their attitude to "Jesus and the Gospel."<sup>2</sup> This content of revelation must have been supplied to him in his pre-conversion days, and the illumination on the Damascus journey only gave it conviction and decision. The conclusion, therefore, is inevitable, as it seems to us,

<sup>1</sup> *Expostulation and Reply*. I owe the illustration to Dr. Steven.

<sup>2</sup> *Jesus and the Gospel*, by James Denney, D.D.

that previous to all instantaneous conversion there is a subconscious action which the impulse then received only carries forward into conscious decision and self-surrender.

There remains, however, one important question to which, it appears to the writer, no previous subconscious action can give the answer. *What of the impulse which sets all these subliminal forces in motion?* What of the "great light" which arrested the persecutor, and the voice which seemed to speak from heaven? We may try to explain these away by a thunderstorm or some other natural phenomenon; but such "rationalizing" of the story can only be successful by tampering with the record. And there are other cases where no such explanation is possible. Take, *e.g.*, the text "I am the door," which glided unsought into Mr. Sage's mind. Granted that it was familiar, what brought it there? Still more remarkable is the instance of Colonel Gardiner. He had gone to make an assignation of evil and was met by a vision of the Crucified. Nor are these cases singular. The writer was once told by a humble man of how he had been cured of the disease of intemperance in, to him, an inexplicable way. He had come home one Saturday night from a drunken debauch and found himself shut out of his house. It was a summer night, and he just lay down on the "landing" of the stair and slept there till early morning. He woke up with a start. A text seemed to be ringing in his soul: "Christ Jesus maketh thee whole." He felt in that moment, he said, that he was cured. He knocked, was admitted, and entered the house, as he declared, a new man. His wife was, of course, very dubious of his assertions; but subsequent events proved them true. He became a religious man and never touched alcohol from that hour, and he was "an old disciple" when he spoke to the writer.

In all these cases there is proof of subliminal action; but there is also proof of something more. The conclusion cannot be resisted that there is *an external agency at work*—the agency of the Divine Spirit.



When we consider conversion as *the crisis of a disease*, we are confirmed in this conclusion. Diseases which have a marked crisis are usually if not always germ diseases. They are due to the multiplication of bacteria in the blood which cause fever and result in great asthenia which may end in death. The body possesses, however, in the white corpuscles the means of counteracting these marauders in the organism. These phagocytes produce a poison which destroy the invaders. Finally they appear to eat them up.<sup>1</sup> It is when this takes place that the crisis occurs and rapid recovery ensues. The question of a favourable issue depends, therefore, on the strength of the body to resist the onset of these enemies *until the crisis is past*; or the succeeding weakness, which may even prove fatal after the crisis, has been overcome.

This is what takes place in the subconsciousness when the germs of sin threaten to destroy the spiritual life. A conflict takes place, and the question as to the result of it must largely depend on *the forces naturally resident there* and the power they can supply to the soul to withstand the attacks of sin. Thus we see the value of previous training, early environment, an informed and educated conscience, and a disposition towards God. These are, so to speak, the natural forces of the soul. We must not, indeed, suppose that they are not due to the action of the Divine Spirit though we thus call them "natural." What we mean is, that they come by the ordinary channels of education and environment, and no supernatural action is necessary to their reception into the personality. They form the natural equipment of the soul in its conflict with evil, and may of themselves effect a cure without any violent "conversion."

But when sin assumes great and acute forms, something more is necessary. The physician, while he may readily accept the proverb, "*Let Nature heal herself*," feels that in the great acute disorders something more is needed. Nature must be assisted. Hence he will do all in his

<sup>1</sup> See Mentzschikoff, *La Nature Humaine*.

power to aid her in her curative work. By warmth in the first stages of rigor, by febrifuges when the temperature rises, by suitable food and wise atmospheric conditions to keep up the strength of his patient, he will do all that a skilled experience can suggest to make the case terminate in a favourable crisis. In certain fevers he will do more than this. He may inject an antitoxin into the blood of the sufferer, thereby enabling it to conquer quickly and easily its dread antagonists and carry the sufferer to a speedy recovery. The extraordinary results obtained by inoculation, first in small-pox as a preventive, now in diphtheria, enteric and other fevers as a counteractive, prove how potent is this new remedy.

In all this we have an analogue to what takes place in "conversion by crisis." The resident forces of grace in the soul are not left by the Divine Spirit to fight unaided. "He giveth more grace"<sup>1</sup>—sometimes by those great experiences of sorrow which bring many into the Kingdom; sometimes by visions and voices such as came to Paul or Augustine; sometimes by the simpler healing messages of Nature of which Brother Lawrence tells when the sight of a naked tree in winter and the reflection that in a few months it would be clothed in a glorious garment of green and white gave him such an impression of the love and power of God "that he could not tell whether it had increased in the above forty years that he had since then lived."<sup>2</sup>

However the message came, it is obviously an external one. It "bloweth where it listeth," and proclaims by the mystery of its origin as well as by its beneficent effects its divine origin.

While we therefore agree with the new Psychology in admitting that in all instantaneous conversion subliminal action is clearly to be seen, there remains a residuary element unsusceptible of this explanation and con-

<sup>1</sup> Jas. iv. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Practice of the Presence of God*, Conversation I.

firmatory of the need of a special and supernatural action.<sup>1</sup>

There remain other very important questions in regard to conversion—as to the permanence of its effects and the elements that go to make for such permanence. These, however, will come better before us in dealing with the second form of conversion—the protracted type, or *conversion by Lysis*, and to this we turn in the succeeding chapter.

<sup>1</sup> We are glad to say that Professor James favours at least the possibility of such supernatural action, holding that “the theologian’s contention that the religious man is moved by an external power is vindicated, for it is one of the peculiarities of invasions from the subconscious region to *take on objective appearances* and to suggest to the subject *an external control*” (*Varieties*, p. 513).



## CHAPTER IV

### CONVERSION BY LYSIS

ONE of the most interesting of Christ's miracles from a psychological point of view is "the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida."<sup>1</sup> Its interest lies in its gradualness. It is not accomplished in one act, like the companion story of Bartimæus, who immediately "followed Jesus in the way." The man "looks up," at the first anointing of his sightless eyes, and joyfully cries, "I see men." The light has come; but it is not yet a perfect cure. It is not coupled with the distinctness of recognition. "I behold them," he adds, "as trees, walking." The man has sight, but it is of little use. A curtain hangs before his retina, hiding at once the dear face of a friend and the sinister intention of a foe. Then follows the second application, and the cure is complete. "He saw every man clearly."

We are not told why Jesus pursued this peculiar method here. Possibly there was some reason in the man's own condition. But for us it has a psychological value. Christ's miracles are often parables as well. They teach us truths about the restoration of the soul as well as that of the body. They point to the passage from a deeper darkness into a fuller light. That passage is often made in a moment or two, as was the case with the penitent thief or the Philippian gaoler. But with others the pathway into light is often arduous and protracted. When the light first comes they rejoice in it and say, "I see." But this emotion is shortlived. Old temptations may

<sup>1</sup> Mark viii. 23-26.

overcome them, or old doubts overshadow them, and they may be tempted to give up the quest as hopeless. The "gradual miracle" becomes the "arrested miracle"; and they may even relapse altogether into a deeper darkness than that in which they were at the first.

If wisely guided, however, this is not the end of the story. The "kindly light" leads them on even "amid encircling gloom," and at last they pass into full assurance. It was possibly to help toward this result that "the gradual miracle" was recorded. Christ would teach us that spiritual illumination may be as slow as physical.

What is it, then, that makes the recovery of spiritual vision a slower thing in some than in others? There are two conditions that may bring about such a result, and it may be helpful to the spiritual practitioner to consider these. One of these is the mental condition of the patient; the other is the spiritual malady under which he suffers.

I. As regards the first, it must be said that *an unsanguine temperament tends to a slow recovery from the disease of sin*. We see this in the first disciples of Christ. There are some whose love, like John's, seems born at first sight. They may have progress into fuller knowledge of that love, but no deep shadow ever seems to eclipse it altogether.

There are others again, like Thomas, whose progress to assurance is protracted by many misgivings. If they go with Christ, it is that they "may die with Him." And when He does die, they passionately refuse to accept any but the most material proofs of His resurrection. Except they "thrust their hands into His side," they will not believe.

When such men do come to the light at last, they are often the grandest of all believers. Out of their experience they gain "a new name," which "no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it"; but the process by which they gain it is always protracted and often painful.

We have an illustration of the power of temperament

in Bunyan's conversion. It seems strange that the author of "Christian at the Cross" should have had any difficulty in knowing when the burden fell finally from his own back and lifting up his eyes he "saw clearly." Yet in his spiritual autobiography he has given a record which stretches over three years, during which he passed through many conversional crises, of which three at least would have given the assurance of the forgiveness of sin to most men.

His first conversion was of the "Imitational" kind, when the terrors of the law drove him into a rectitude of conduct and a religiousness of life that many would have been glad to accept as a proof that they were "all right." "I did set myself to keep the commandments of God, and thought I pleased God as well as any man in England." But one day in Bedford he hears "certain holy women talking in the sun." The "new birth" was their theme, and they spoke with a joy of conviction that he knew nothing of. "One thing was lacking," and he set himself to find it with that ardour which was characteristic of all his thinking about God.

Then came his wonderful vision of "the strait gate";—"the high mountain," one side in deep shadow, the other bathed in celestial light; the high wall that separated the hemisphere of darkness from that of light, and the narrow gate that pierced that wall. The scene unfolded itself, and the glad seer beheld himself struggling through the aperture into the light of full assurance. It was a vision that seemed to fulfil itself shortly after, when he heard one preach a sermon on these words in the Song, "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair." That day he seemed to himself to have passed through the wicket-gate. He went home joyful in heart, with this word ever ringing in his soul, "Thou art my love, thou art my love, and nothing shall separate thee from my love," so that he could have told his love "to the very crows that sat upon the ploughed lands before me."

Could any one doubt his conversion after that?



"Alas! within forty days I began to question all again." Frightful doubts of the reality of his faith invaded his mind. Sometimes he was tempted "to curse and swear or speak some evil thing against God." His heart became "exceeding hard." He would have given "a thousand pounds for a tear." He could not attend church but "with sore and great affliction." Yet he never lost hope, and one day great peace came to his soul by a text which glided into his troubled heart: "He hath made peace by the blood of His cross." "This was a good day to me; I hope I shall never forget it."

But now a new and more terrible temptation assailed. A voice seemed to say to him: "Sell Christ: sell Him; sell Him; sell Him; as fast as man could speak." After he had endured this for weeks, he one day muttered to himself, as he lay in bed, "Well, let Him go, if He will." Then instantly realizing what he had done, he flung out of bed and went "moping into the field, like a man bereft of life, now past all recovery." But suddenly another text "rushed in" upon him, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," and "I began to conceive peace in my soul. I saw as if the Tempter did steal away, ashamed of what he had done."

This seems to have been the climax of the series of crises through which he passed ere he entered into perfect peace. It was by no means the last; but none ever so nearly bereft him of hope, and gradually, under the influence of Mr. Gifford, he was led into unbroken peace. "I saw with the eyes of my soul Christ Jesus stand at God's right hand" as "my righteousness in heaven. Now did the scales fall off. I was loosed from mine affliction."<sup>1</sup>

Bunyan's experience is the most classic instance in history of "conversion by Lysis." We see how largely it was due to his naturally imaginative and gloomy temperament, increased by the sombre character of much of the religious literature of that age. We cannot regret it, since it has enriched the "Pilgrim" with thrilling

<sup>1</sup> *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (abridged).

incidents, impossible to one who had not passed through such experiences. Yet in reading his account we should remember that those temptations of "the valley of the shadow of death" and "Doubting Castle" which he has placed far on in the Christian life belonged in his own life to his conversional period. We cannot help thinking there is a certain spiritual anachronism here. No doubt such experiences may and do come to mature Christians; but this is not the normal or ideal one. The Second Part is in this respect an advance on the First.

But the most practically valuable lesson to be gathered from such a story is the appreciation of *the importance of temperament in the religious life*. Bunyan tells how in his distress he once went for comfort to a friend. He told him he feared he had committed "the unpardonable sin." That "Job's comforter," after hearing his story, said he really thought he must have done so, as he had never heard of "a child of God" passing through such terrible temptations. "I found," says Bunyan, that though "a good man" he was "a stranger to much combat with the devil. Wherefore I went to God, as well as I could, for mercy still."

Psychologists have distinguished, as is well known, four temperaments: the sanguine or joyful, the melancholic or sentimental, the choleric or practical, and the phlegmatic or contemplative. All these have their merits and defects, and those which have the greatest defects are those which when rightly guided have the greatest merits. Thus the most superficially antipathetic to the religious life are the melancholic with its proneness to doubt, and the phlegmatic with its tendency to indifference. But when wisely guided the doubter may develop into a champion of faith, and when stirred by deep emotion the phlegmatic soul may develop into the Quietist—the type of Mary of Bethany, of Madame Guyon and St. John.

In dealing with souls, a true diagnosis must therefore have regard to this "personal equation." A wise perception may mean all the difference between leading a soul



into the light and thrusting it into despair. It was surely a tragic blunder to see in the future author of *The Pilgrim's Progress* one who had committed "the sin unto death." Yet in a less degree we are all apt to make similar mistakes by forgetting the importance of the temperamental influence in religious experience.

Christ would perhaps teach us this in "the gradual miracle." The spiritual eyesight of the sanguine soul may yield to an instantaneous remedy. That of the melancholic needs long and patient treatment.

II. The other reason why spiritual recovery is in some a slower process than in others is because of the *peculiar character of the disease under which the patient is suffering*.

There are certain fevers which are called intermittent and relapsing. They differ materially from each other, but have the same curious feature of apparent recovery being followed by a return of the disease. The temperature rises to a climax and then quickly falls. The patient feels better and thinks himself well. But soon the unfavourable symptoms recur, and he is down again, seemingly as bad as ever. Seemingly, but not really. The second attack is less severe than the first, and the third less than the second, and so through a series of falling curves of temperature the tide of sickness gradually ebbs out. This is the case with certain forms of sin. Of course the curve of effervescence and defervescence is not usually so perfectly graded as with the body. The defervescence resembles rather the cure of such an obstinate malady as tuberculosis, in which there may be long intervals of relief, followed by exacerbations of the disease as severe as the other and apparently grave in their prognosis, yet leading in the end to a cure which if not perfect is at least satisfactory.

This is the case, *e.g.*, with certain types of *alcoholic intemperance*. We are tempted to say that if a man has once gone back on his Temperance pledge he is a hopeless case, and no doubt such a statement is often justified.



Yet it must be remembered that there are certain forms of intemperance which are periodic in their outbursts. We must not therefore give up all hope because the man under one of these has yielded to old desire. In point of fact there are cases of those who after a second or third or even fourth relapse have recovered permanently from their terrible disease. At each fall, they never lost hope, but said to themselves, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy. When I fall, I shall arise."<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, there is the danger lest the sin become chronic and the repentances from it be of no permanent value. We have already said that the more often a conversional crisis is repeated in a man's life, the less value it has at each time. This is specially true with conversions from drunkenness or the sins of the flesh. Each time a backsliding takes place, a serious injury is done to the whole moral nature, until at last there is no power left for real repentance. The soul becomes riddled through with sentimentality. Good resolutions are easily made, but as quickly broken, and "conversion" becomes a byword for the scorner.

In the Life of the Rev. William Ross of Cowcaddens, Glasgow, there is a wise remark made by one of his workers in regard to this type of religionist. "On Monday night," writes this earnest evangelist, "we had eight cases to deal with. I had to leave these persons with a worker and see a man who had fallen from a telephone pole and was badly injured. Next morning I said, 'What about these people last night?' The worker's remark was very graphic: 'There wisna enough hale wood as would hold a nail.'"<sup>2</sup> The nail of repentance had been driven in so often before that now there was nothing left to grip. The gradual miracle had in this case become the arrested miracle, and the arrested miracle had become the tragic miracle—the miracle of a soul that saw the light afar off and yet fell into the everlasting darkness.

On the other hand, it must be said that this is not always so. There are cases, some of them quite remark-

<sup>1</sup> Mic. vii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of William Ross of Cowcaddens*, p. 134.

able, of men who have gone on long in sin, reacting against it from time to time with no permanent recovery, yet who in the long-run have obtained their freedom. The recovery has not perhaps usually occurred by a regular Lysis. It rather resembles a series of battles in which the combatant is beaten time after time but at last gains a signal triumph. Yet it cannot be denied that in all these previous failures something was gained which, stored up in the memory, proved of value in the last attack.

Thus in the autobiography of the Rev. Donald Sage (already quoted) there is a case of a Highland fiddler who was had in great request at the country weddings of his district. At these gatherings much drinking took place, and he fell into intemperate habits, which greatly distressed him. He made frequent efforts to break off this habit, but always fell back and was in danger finally of losing hope. At last a great preacher came to assist at the "Communion," and though the fiddler never dared to go to the "Table," he was there listening eagerly all day, and at the close of the evening service came home with his wife, a godly woman, deeply moved, but saying nothing. After supper he knelt down in long and earnest prayer. Then he went to the cupboard where he usually kept his violin. He took it down and drew his fingers lovingly across the strings. His wife, who had been eyeing him in silence, began to expostulate: "Oh, Donald! Not on a Sabbath evening," she cried, "and a Communion Sabbath evening!" He replied no word, but slowly laid his beloved violin down on the hearthstone, lifted his foot, and stamped it to fragments. That night the battle was won. He had made "the great renunciation," and never afterwards "looked back."

Here was a case of Lysis ending in a Crisis. We must not suppose that his previous efforts had nothing to do with the final result. They were all doubtless stored up in the subconscious, producing there disquiet and the maturing of a desperate resolve. But it seems clear that without the electric spark of the preacher's voice they



would never have exploded into the resolution they did. They would probably have ended in the "sorrow which worketh death."<sup>1</sup>

The question therefore remains to which we referred in the previous chapter, What are the elements in any conversional experience, instantaneous or protracted, which make for permanence in the change brought about by it? In other words, what are the hopeful symptoms in conversion? What is it that prevents backsliding?

There is a general and not unfounded impression that this type of religious life is attended by many fallings-away. There are some, indeed, who put it much lower than others. Mr. Ross, whom we have already referred to, mentions that only 2 per cent. of his cases had turned out badly in a year. But a much longer time would be needed to estimate the value of such experiences. For backsliding is not merely the result of old habits of intemperance or sensuality regaining their ascendancy in some catastrophic recrudescence. It may come much more subtly by the fluctuation of feeling, the dying of enthusiasm, the insidious infiltration of worldliness. Every minister knows how many "extinct volcanoes" there are in his congregation, men who were once "converted" but of whom one must say:

"Behold the man who was and is,  
And all he was is overworn."

It is doubtless these the prophet has in his mind when he says of the Israel of his day: "Your goodness is as a morning cloud and as the dew that goeth early away."<sup>2</sup> These are the "thorny-ground hearers" who bring forth "no fruit to perfection."<sup>3</sup>

It is to be noted that Starbuck estimates "relapses from conversion" at 7 per cent. males and 5 per cent. females, but when he goes on to tabulate fluctuations from enthusiasm to indifference he reaches the enormous totals of 30 per cent. among males and 65 per cent.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Hos. vi. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Luke viii. 14.



among females.<sup>1</sup> This is much too high, and no doubt includes many cases of a mere quietening down of the feelings, which are not to be regarded as a leaving of "the first love."<sup>2</sup> At the same time, a sober estimate would not probably put it at less than 25 per cent., and the great majority of these are those who have passed through a conversional crisis.

The question therefore is a practical one—Why is it that so many "new births" abort? What are the causes of transitoriness in religious impressions? Or, putting it more practically, What are the elements in a "conversion" that tend to make it permanent?

The first of the moderns to deal with this question—and he did so in his own masterly way—was Jonathan Edwards. His answer to this question is that it is "knowledge," by which he means the intellectual apprehension of divine truth, that truly saves. Quoting the text, "I pray that your love may abound more and more in knowledge,"<sup>3</sup> he says: "The child of God is graciously affected because he sees and understands something more of divine things than he did before, more of God or Christ and of the glorious things in the Gospel." This is the reason why what else were transitory emotions crystallize into character and endure. He quotes from Shepard: "Many," he says, "that have had mighty strong affections at first conversion afterwards become dry and wither and consume and pine and die away, because they never had light to conviction enough. I never liked violent affections or pangs, but only such as were dropped in by light; because those come from an external principle and last not, but these do. Men are not affrighted by the light of the sun, though clearer than the lightning."<sup>4</sup>

There is no doubt truth in this explanation. The secret of much of the permanence of the Wesleyan Revival was its class-meeting, where "heat" was never suffered to

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology of Conversion*, p. 358.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. ii. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. i. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Edwards, *On Religious Affections*, part iii. sect. 4, abridged.

remain long without light. At the same time, another, and we venture to think, even deeper explanation is suggested by the doctrine of the subconscious self and its action in conversion. We see it in the story of Bunyan's struggles which we have just recorded. What was it made the work of grace so permanent in him? What kept him up, never hopeless altogether though often despairing, rising again after each new fall? Quite evidently it was his sense of sin: the burden of guilt upon his back, his fear of being hopelessly lost, and the awfulness of such a doom. In other words, it was his *conscience* that ever drove him on. This would give him no rest until he found peace in Christ. We are here, therefore, taught that it is when the appeal reaches the conscience that an element in the subconscious life is invaded, so deep and all powerful that its effects remain long after the original appeal to the emotions has passed away. It is this demand of the conscience for guidance as to the "way of peace" that leads to that "knowledge of God" which Edwards desiderates as the only sure basis for religious permanence, and it is this conscience, when satisfied with peace "through the blood of the Cross," that leads to that humility and love which are the most hopeful features in a young convert.<sup>1</sup>

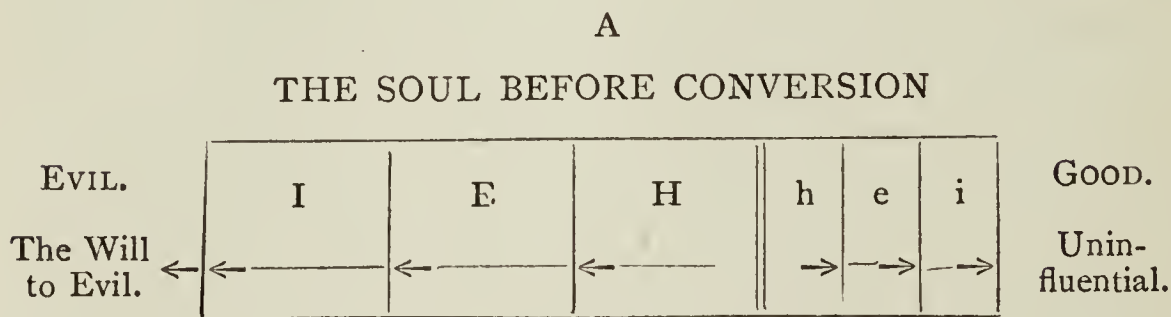
On the other hand, where the conversional impulse has simply reached the feelings, due perhaps to the mass-movement of some great revival, the result cannot be anything else than transitory. The impulse will pass away, and the soul will revert to its old equilibrium—one whose balance is on the side of evil.

The result may perhaps be expressed more graphically by the following diagrams of the soul, *before, during* and *after* conversion in a mass-movement.

Let the Intellectual and Environmental and Hereditary elements in a man's personality which are on the side of

<sup>1</sup> So Bunyan: "The guilt of sin did help me much to understand the Scriptures" (*Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*).

evil be represented by the capital letters I, E, and H. Let the same elements which incline to goodness be represented by the same letters in small type, i, e, h. Then, if the first preponderate, the soul will have a bias toward evil; in other words, be in a state of spiritual disease. Thus:



Thus far with the conscious life; but besides this there is, as we have seen, a vaster subconscious one. Souls, it has been said, are like icebergs: two-thirds are beneath the surface. Among these subconscious elements we must certainly place at the top that of Impulsiveness or Suggestibility, which is so strongly present in the movements of the crowd.<sup>1</sup> Let us denote this by S. Below that, let us place those elements of religious truth which have been instilled into the mind in youth and are now retained in a dim, half-conscious way in the memory. Let us represent this by R K. We place it below Impulse, as something deeper and more permanent in its influence on the soul. Beneath that, we place the Conscience, as the deepest of man's subliminal faculties.

There may be a certain surprise in some minds when they are asked to believe that the Conscience is a subconscious faculty. We cannot stay to argue the point here. But we have no doubt it is so. Its mystic authority,<sup>2</sup> its independence of merely rational considerations, and its persistent and often unwelcome interference

<sup>1</sup> See *The Psychology of the Crowd*, by Gustave le Bon.

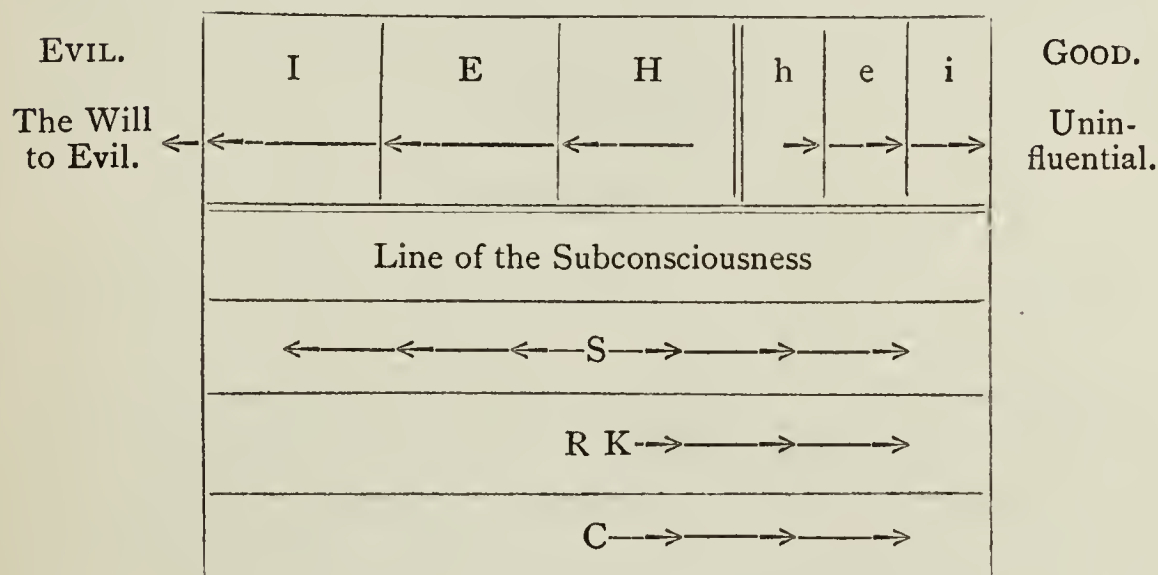
<sup>2</sup> "Conscience, if it had power as it has authority, would rule the world" (Kant).



with the actions of the conscious life, all argue a source deeper than that of the senses and the intellect. And, *naturally*, it is always on the side of good. As Bishop Butler says: "In cases of conscience, first thoughts are always the best."<sup>1</sup> Denoting Conscience, then, by the letter C, we may now complete our representation of the soul before conversion.

B

THE SOUL BEFORE CONVERSION

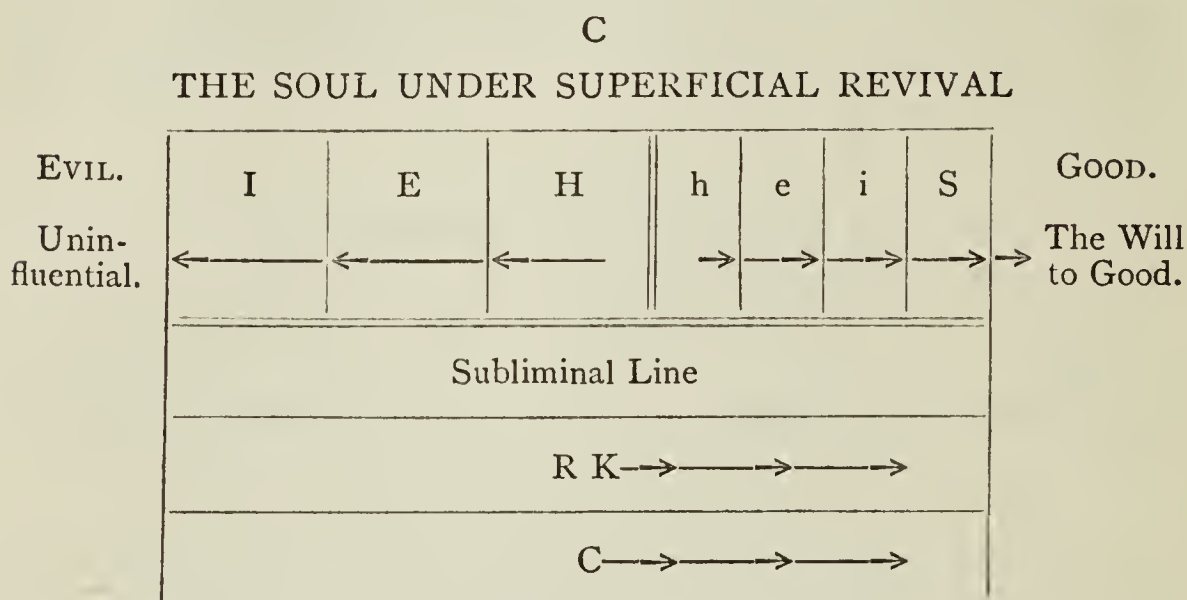


It will be noticed we have placed the arrow-heads in the S section, which stands for Suggestibility, or the openness to Impulse, pointing in either direction. We have done so as in themselves they have no bias either one way or another. We have placed those in Religious Knowledge and Conscience as pointing towards the good, but as they are supposed to be deeply buried in the subconscious life they have at present no direct influence beyond a vague uneasiness, coupled from time to time with monitions of warning as the soul presses on in the path of evil.

But now let us suppose that under the influence of revival the impulsive tract is stirred into activity and "explodes" into the conscious life with a strong direction towards good, then if the impulse thus felt goes no deeper into the subconscious, or if the elements there are so

<sup>1</sup> Sermon on "Balaam."

buried or so poorly educated that there comes from them nothing of any spiritual value, we have the condition of soul which may be described as that of a shallow or superficial awakening. Thus:



For a time such a condition may be regarded as very hopeful. Under the influence of the impulse given by a strong enthusiasm or the magnetic power of the crowd, the soul is carried away from the side of evil towards that of good and a conversion takes place.

Such a condition, however, has no permanence. "Because it has no root it withers away."<sup>1</sup> When the revival is over and "the shouting and the tumult dies," the impulse toward God that came from mere emotion sinks back into the subliminal, like a wave into the sea, and the soul naturally and inevitably resumes its bias toward evil, and "backsliding" takes place.

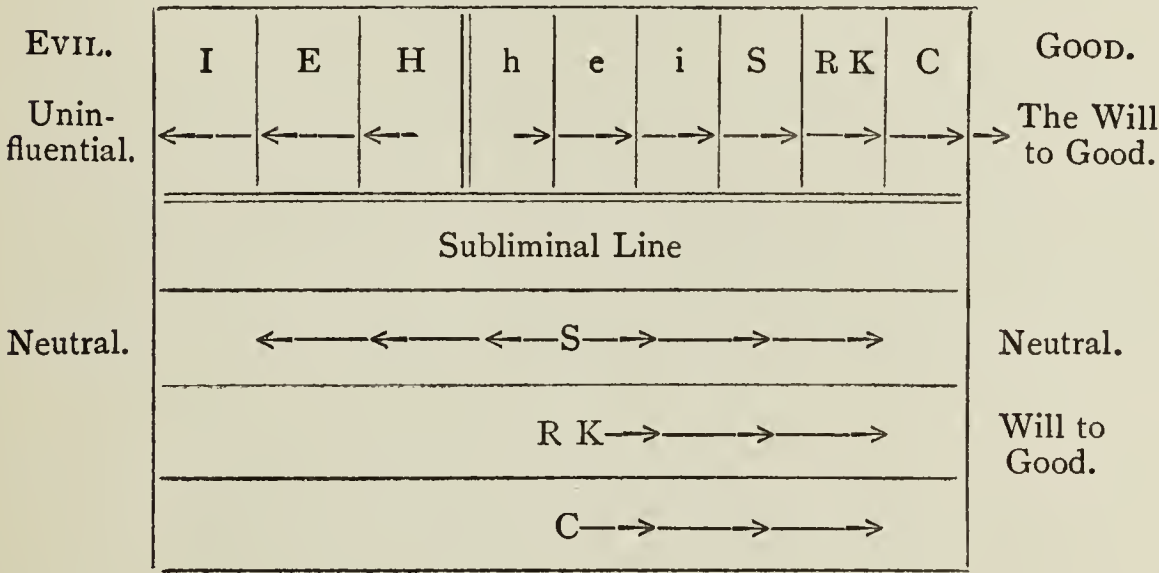
But now let us suppose that the revival has a deeper result. Let its appeal be to a heart informed by religious knowledge, or better still let it be made in such a way that it reaches the conscience, rouses it to a deep sense of sin, and points it to God's remedy for sin, as the only way by which its painful wound can be healed, and the result will be vastly different. Besides the upthrust of those impulsive elements which are quickened by the influence of numbers, the far more stable factors of religious knowledge (long

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 6.

neglected but now eagerly recalled under the pressure of an awakened conscience seeking peace) will emerge into the conscious life of the soul, and urge it forward on the path of life with an earnestness of purpose unknown in the previous case. We shall have then a soul-diagram something like this :

D

THE SOUL AFTER RADICAL CONVERSION



Such an experience is not only stronger in its first momentum, but it has in it all the qualities of permanence. Though the impulsive elements will pass away after a time, as they did in the previous case, the elements of religious knowledge and conscientiousness will remain and prevent the soul from turning away like Pliable at the first "Slough of Despond."

The root, therefore, of backsliding is to be found in the fact that *the deeper elements of the soul have not been touched*. The cure has not gone deep enough. It has been a cure of the symptoms of the disease, not of the disease itself. This disease has its seat in the conscience. Its root is alienation from God ; a feeling that He is displeased with it, and a sense of guilt arising from that feeling.

Hence the hopefulness of the symptom of guilt, and also its hopelessness if the wound of which it speaks is not healed and its cause taken away.



But how can this wound in the conscience be healed? The Gospel of Christ comes primarily to answer that question, and it answers it essentially by one remedy and one only—the Cross. “The blood of Christ shall cleanse your conscience.”<sup>1</sup>

To that remedy we therefore turn our attention in the next chapter.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ix. 14.

## CHAPTER V

### REMEDIA CRUCIS

AS to the fact that the Cross has had a profoundly healing effect on the troubles of humanity there will be no dispute in any candid mind. Christ was a true prophet when He said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself."<sup>1</sup> The well-known lines of Keble express a general sentiment:

"Is it not strange, the darkest hour  
That ever dawned on sinful earth  
Should touch the heart with softer power  
For comfort, than an angel's mirth,  
That to the Cross the mourner's eyes should turn  
Sooner than where the Stars of Christmas burn?"<sup>2</sup>

At the opposite pole of religious thought, Matthew Arnold spoke to the same effect on his dying day: "Yes, the Cross remaineth; and in the straits of the soul it makes its ancient appeal."<sup>3</sup>

When, however, we seek to inquire into the secret of this magnetism, we are in presence of a perplexing question, to which the most different answers have been given. These answers have indeed resulted in such bitter controversies that many are inclined to say that the power of the Cross is a mystery which we had better not seek to explain. "It is the fact of the Cross," says Dr. Horton, "not the theory of the Cross which saves."

While admitting this, we do not quite share the view that the theory is of no value. Love, as Dr. Denney says,

<sup>1</sup> John xii. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Hymn for Good Friday.

<sup>3</sup> *Life of John Watson*, by Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, p. 130.

must be made "intelligible" in order to be a perfect love.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, it is true that the "theory" must be very simple, else there will be a suspicion of the love that needs so much explanation. There has perhaps been too much theorizing about the Cross. Under it love has often grown cold. Here fact is worth a ton of theory.

Our method should escape such a danger, for it is an entirely experimental one. We are to look at the Cross from a purely remedial point of view. Why does the Cross heal? What is the explanation of its admittedly medicinal effect on the maladies of the soul? When we have answered this question, we may be in a better position to face other questions. All theories must rest on experience for their verification. There can be no true Theology of the Cross without a correct Psychology of the Cross.

Looking, then, at the sufferings of Christ from a remedial point of view, we note that they make three great appeals to man—to his longing for sympathy, to his instinct for hero-worship, and to his need for pardon.

I. There is something about sorrow which is in itself refining and elevating. Some one has spoken of "the cleansing power of pity." We instinctively lower the voice of passion when we look into the silent face of the dead. Animalism, save the most callous, is rebuked by the spectacle of a great sorrow. This is our first feeling as we draw near the spectacle of Calvary. We can see it to-day in the stillness which sweeps over a vast audience when such a theme as Handel's "He was despised" is rendered by a worthy artiste.

This was the first impression made by the Divine sorrow. "All the people that came together to that sight, smote their breasts and returned."<sup>2</sup> Whatever their judgment about the Man who suffered, they were deeply moved by the spectacle of His sufferings and returned saddened and sobered by the sight of them.

It is true that the same text reminds us also of the

<sup>1</sup> *Death of Christ*, p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xxiii. 48, A.V.



transitoriness of such feelings. "They returned"; moved a while by pity, they went back to the city probably the same as they left it: the worldly to his world, the frivolous to his folly, the sinful to his sin. Their emotions, like all merely emotional religion, were

"of the sky,  
And from our earthly memory fade away."<sup>1</sup>

It is partly this that has led the Reformed Church to rate at a low value all descriptions of the physical sufferings of Jesus. Thus Ritschl quotes from Luther a passage on the danger of substituting mere pity for the appeal of the Cross to the conscience. After condemning the lurid descriptions of the agonies of Christ, given by Catholic Lenten orators, he lays down three subjects which ought to govern a preacher's thoughts on Good Friday:

1. God's wrath against sin here revealed.
2. God's love to sinners no less revealed.
3. The sufferings of Christ as an example to the saved.<sup>2</sup>

There is no doubt real truth in Luther's criticism. "Pathos is the luxury of grief"; but the grief of Christ can never be a luxury to the true disciple. To the reverent mind there was something revolting in the crowds of tourists who used to go to Ober-Ammergau to amuse themselves by feasting their eyes on the spectacle of the sufferings of Christ.

Yet, though pity is transitory, it may prepare the mind for thoughts that are permanent. We should never forget that Scripture says more about the sufferings of Christ than anything else in history. Our hymn-writers are perhaps wiser than the theologians in these matters.

"See! from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth, *Sonnets*.

<sup>2</sup> *Versöhnung und Rechtfertigung*, vol. iii. sec. 58.

<sup>3</sup> Isaac Watts, in what Matthew Arnold called the greatest of Christian hymns.

For our part, we think the tendency to-day is to make too little though not too much of the physical sufferings of Christ. A little more of fact would make many a Communion meditation more quickening.

Pity, however, is but the prophylactic to the true medicine of the Cross. It is only when, along with this human pity, faith comes to reveal behind it a Divine love in some way sharing our pain and becoming one with us in our human sufferings and weakness and death, that the Cross of Calvary becomes permanently elevating in its effects.

And it does so because it then becomes a revealer of that love of God which to know is eternal life. It makes us feel that "God was in Christ reconciling the world"<sup>1</sup> to Himself, showing it that He loved it with an uttermost love, that in all our affliction He was afflicted, that in His love and pity He redeems us and bears us still—as in the days of old.<sup>2</sup>

Goethe is not one we would suspect of Pietism, but in *Wilhelm Meister* he has given us one of the best illustrations of this side of the "Remedia Crucis." In the "Confessions of a Beautiful Soul" he makes that "fair saint" see in the Divine sorrow a healing for her human pain.

"That the eternal," she writes, "descended as an inhabitant to the depths in which we dwell, which he surveys and comprehends; that he passed through our lot from stage to stage, from conception and birth to the grave; and that by this marvellous circuit he again mounted to these shining heights, whither we too must rise in order to be happy: all this was revealed to me as in a dawning remoteness. . . . But how shall we obtain a share in this priceless benefit? 'By faith,' the Scripture says. And what is faith? To consider the account of an event as true, what help can this afford me? I must be enabled to appropriate its effects, its consequences. This appropriating faith must be a state of mind peculiar, and to the natural man unknown.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19.

<sup>2</sup> From Isa. lxiii. 9.

“‘Now, gracious Father, grant me faith!’ So prayed I once in the deepest heaviness of heart. I was leaning on a little table where I sat; my tear-stained countenance was hidden in my hands. I was now in the condition in which we seldom are, but in which we are required to be, if God is to regard our prayers.

“O that I could but paint what I felt then! A sudden force drew my soul to the Cross where Jesus once expired. It was a sudden force, a pull, I cannot name it otherwise, such as leads one soul to an absent loved one. . . . So did my soul approach the Son of Man who died upon the Cross; and that instant did I know what faith was.

“‘This is faith!’ said I: and started up as if half frightened. I now endeavoured to get certain of my feeling, my view, and shortly I became convinced that my soul had acquired a power of soaring upwards, which was altogether new to it.”<sup>1</sup>

In this account, which may have come from Goethe’s own mother, we see how the Cross works faith in this sorrow-laden heart. It assures her of One who looks upon her in love and sympathy, who has suffered like her, nay for her; just that by His participation in her sufferings He might save her. Let her exercise the same faith in the love of God that Jesus manifested in His dying hour, and she will gain the same victory over her trials that He gained. She may well do so; for He the Living One that was dead and is alive again is with her still, to assure her that God is love, that He loves her, and that, if she will only trust Him, He will lead her out of all her trials to victory and peace.

Such is the attitude which “the modern mind,” when of a religious type, can most easily adopt to the Cross of Calvary. It finds its most famous representative in the massive and devout Ritschl. Discarding the view that Christ’s sufferings are a satisfaction to the Divine Justice,

<sup>1</sup> *Wilhelm Meister*, Carlyle’s tr., vol. ii. (bk. vi.) p. 100.



“inasmuch as it makes God a finite personality, by ascribing to Him a necessity which is not conditioned in His will,”<sup>1</sup> and is besides inconsistent with Christ’s teaching about His Fatherhood, Ritschl goes on to show that what Christ did upon the Cross was to give man a representation of how the Divine love can triumph over suffering and death. By the spirit of Divine faith and perfect forgiveness He there manifested, He became victorious over the world, and showed man how he could become victorious too. This is by exercising the same unfaltering faith in God’s love, for “this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith.”<sup>2</sup>

The class of mind to which this view of the Cross specially appeals is that of the cultured inquirer, not deeply tainted by actual sin. Brought up in a pure home, well educated in mind, his sense of sin is not so deep as that of one “who has fought with the beasts at Ephesus.” To him Divine punishment is always paternal, never retributive. Hence the thought of a Divine Justice needing satisfaction is antipathetic to him. Nevertheless, he clings to the Cross as the greatest and divinest thing in human experience; as the revelation of the sympathy of God.

We see examples of this type of mind in the saintly Horace Bushnell and the reverent Denison Maurice, and in view of them need surely have no scruple in calling it a “saving” view. It may not go so deep as some of us would wish to go; but it succeeds in the main thing, it reveals to men the love of God. It draws them to that love, makes them trust in it and strive to be like it.

II. The second appeal which the Cross makes to man, and by the success of that appeal heals and saves, is the supreme exhibition it gives of the beauty of self-sacrifice.

<sup>1</sup> *Versöhnung und Rechtfertigung*, vol. iii. ch. iv.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John v. 4.

As sorrow is one of the commonest feelings of humanity, so the complete sacrifice of self is one of the rarest. While many of us are unselfish in regard to a part of our life, the absolute and deliberate abnegation of it all is the quality of a small minority. Such as have attained to it have always been hailed by their fellows as the peers of their race, the objects of admiration and worship, the inspiration of poetry and the makers of history.

Among these heroes of history Jesus stands supreme. Whether we regard His sacrifice from the point of view of the object for which He made it—to reveal the noblest conception of God ever given to man—or the method in which He carried it out—in the prime of manhood when life is most sweet; deliberately, not at the impulse of a battle hour but anticipated for months with dreadful distinctness; attended, too, with the shame of a criminal and the agonizing sufferings of a soul as sensitive as a woman's, yet borne all through with a patient love that shrank but never faltered—from every point of view the Cross stands supreme as the noblest example of sacrifice ever given in history.

The moral beauty of such an act was bound to have a profound influence on all who had soul enough to be inspired with what is lofty. "We live," says Wordsworth, "by admiration, hope, and love." Of these three, too little regard perhaps is had for the power of admiration. Yet wonder is the parent of knowledge; admiration is the mother of imitation. Hence we cannot be surprised that the Cross should draw all men, and that having drawn them it should inspire to an imitation of it.

It is in this that Carlyle finds the secret of all true religion. Christianity is simply to him a sublime Hero-worship of the Man of Calvary.

That there is the noblest incentive to action in such a view is proved by the experience of many of our soldiers in "the Great War." Probably there is no doctrine of the faith which has more appealed to them than the

doctrine of the Cross. Chaplains and Hut-workers have testified to the willingness of men to communicate at the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, and to the solemnity of these simple services. These men felt that in giving themselves for their country they were walking in the footsteps of the noblest of the race, and in most cases at least comforted themselves by the thought that in doing so they would be Divinely helped by His unseen fellowship and presence.

The last thought, however, brings us to the discovery that to the true disciple the "Imitation of Christ" is not a mere imitation, and that if it were so it would never have effected the results which it has succeeded in producing. For there is nothing so difficult, and even depressing, as the painful imitation of a great original by a youthful admirer. We have an illustration of that in Carlyle himself. If ever there was a man Carlyle worshipped, it was Goethe. Yet, as Matthew Arnold points out, no two men were more unlike. The best things in Carlyle, his earnestness and sincerity, hail not from Weimar but from Ecclefechan. The best things in Goethe, his clarity and serenity, find no reflection in the turgid pages of *Sartor*. As Mr. Hutton says: "It is a weary way to God; but a wearier far to any demi-god."<sup>1</sup>

With the Hero-worship of the Man of Calvary it is, however, entirely different. When the soul "admires" the Cross, and passes on from admiration of it to worship and from worship to "imitation," there seems to come from that Cross a certain something, call it "grace," or "the power of the Holy Spirit," or whatever you like, which enables the humble worshipper to feel that he can appropriate and in a measure reproduce what he thus admires. He is sustained by the conviction that He whom he follows is with him to help him along the same high path of renunciation and sacrifice.

Hence the "Imitatio Christi" as represented in such great classics as that of Thomas à Kempis, or in the experi-

<sup>1</sup> *Literary Essays*, by R. H. Hutton, "Essay on Goethe," vol. i. p. 89.



ence of such saints as that of Paul and Francis of Assisi, has always been more than the copy of a dead original. It has been accompanied by the faith that He whom they are following is united to them like an Alpine guide by a cord of love, "a mystical union," helping them to climb what else were inaccessible heights. The "Imitatio" thus always ends with the devout soul in the "Unio Mystica"—the "I live, and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" of St. Paul.<sup>1</sup>

This sense of oneness between the believer and Christ in His death does not of course exclude other views. It is by no means exclusive of a doctrine of "Substitution." The Christ in us is quite compatible with the Christ for us. This the greatest Christian mystics have all believed. If, however, they were asked for an explanation of how one man's "merit" could atone for another's demerit, they would probably have found the explanation of it here. They would have said with St. Paul that what Christ did for them, they must do in Him, in order that they may become sharers in His merits. By faith, they are identified with Him in His sacrificial work, "crucified" with Him, "buried" with Him, "risen" with Him. Unless this is so, the Cross has no value for them: "For we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died," in Him, "that they who live should henceforth live no more unto themselves but unto Him who died for them."<sup>2</sup>

To belittle the faith in this mystic union between the follower and the Followed, as Dr. Denney does in his last and otherwise great work on the Atonement, seems to the writer to betray an extraordinary misconception of the mind of St. Paul. He speaks of it as "a throwing out words at permanently inexpressible things, which it is beside the mark to reduce to cold prose."<sup>3</sup> If this means that we cannot put it with the scientific precision of a chemical formula, the objection applies to every doctrine of the Christian faith; but if it regards it as the mere

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. v. 14.

<sup>3</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, p. 306.

raptures of enthusiastic devotion which have no scientific value, then we must answer that it is a thought which has inspired the lives of the greatest saints of the Church—St. Paul with his “In Christo,” St. Francis with his “Stigmata,” St. Catherine with her “Marriage of the Soul with Christ,” and Henry Drummond in his “Changed Life.”

We thus see how far beyond the mere imitation of an earthly original is what the Christian writers mean when they speak of the “Imitation of Christ.” It is no mere copy of a dead exemplar, but the following of a living Friend who not only draws their admiration but sustains them in the imitation which follows from it. It is when it is so that this attitude becomes a truly “healing” one to the sin-sick soul. Otherwise it can only aggravate the malady of those whose weakness it discovers. Like Heine, when he saw the mutilated Venus de Milo: “Yes, she is beautiful; but she has no arms. She cannot raise me up.”

III. There is, however, one other appeal, the last and we must also say the deepest, which the Cross makes to the soul—*the appeal to the conscience.*

We have already seen that among the symptoms of soul-sickness the sense of guilt is the deepest and most significant. The root of this we have also traced to the conviction that sin is an offence against God, and that by the persistence of the soul in it God is driven away from the spirit of man and becomes alienated from it. That this feeling is a true one we have also found to be corroborated by the fact that when the soul, in spite of this warning, continues in the path of the transgressor, it enters on a course of disease and ultimate death. Hence whenever a soul, by one of the several ways we have outlined in the previous chapters, is awakened to a true sense of its own condition, the first and most dominant of all its desires is the longing to be right with God—in New Testament language, to be reconciled to Him, to feel the sense of His fatherly forgiveness of the past, to realize

that He has "cast its sins behind His back, and remembers them no more for ever."<sup>1</sup>

How is this message of Divine absolution to be experienced? It was the experience of the earliest Christians, and it has been the experience of Christians ever since, that it came to them through Christ, and especially through the knowledge, the spiritual knowledge, of the mystery of the Cross.

We have said this was the experience of the earliest Christians, and it is a remarkable fact that it was so. For Christ had apparently proclaimed the free forgiveness of God without any other condition attaching to it than that of simple and sincere repentance. So He proclaimed it in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, and so He acted on the proclamation in His treatment of the woman who was a sinner.

But no sooner had Christ been "glorified" than His disciples attached this great doctrine of Forgiveness to the mystery of His Cross. Without in the least minimizing its importance or its freeness, they pointed to Him as its Mediator and to the Cross as its explanation. "Through this man," they said, "is proclaimed unto you the remission of sins."<sup>2</sup> As even Harnack admits, "the older missionaries taught and preached that Christ died for sins."<sup>3</sup> No doubt it was Paul who brought the doctrine into supreme prominence. But it is to be found, as Dr. Denney has well pointed out, in all the great teachers of the New Testament.<sup>4</sup> The doctrine of the Cross as the ground of the Divine forgiveness of sins is next to the Incarnation the supreme doctrine of the New Testament. It was this Peter preached on the day of Pentecost.<sup>5</sup> It was this Philip proclaimed as the meaning of the "slaughtered lamb" of the ancient prophet.<sup>6</sup> It was with this Paul began his preaching, not as something original,

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxxviii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xiii. 38.

<sup>3</sup> *Ausbreitung des Christentums*, Eng. tr., vol. i. p. 474.

<sup>4</sup> *The Death of Christ*, by Dr. James Denney.

<sup>5</sup> Acts ii. 38.

<sup>6</sup> Acts viii. 32.



but as the common evangel—"I delivered unto you first of all *that which I also received*, how that Christ died for our sins."<sup>1</sup>

There is surely something remarkable about this. No doubt there are many hints of it in the Gospels, but it cannot be said to be the doctrine preached by the Master Himself. It may be implied in His insistence on faith in Himself as the condition of forgiveness, but it is never stated. When Jesus said to the paralytic, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," He did not add, "for My name's sake."

If we are to believe the record of the Gospels, it was revealed to the disciples by the Risen Christ and the Holy Spirit working on their minds as they brooded on what else had been an inexplicable mystery to them, the mystery of the Cross.<sup>2</sup> But the wondrous efficacy of the Cross as the medicine for a wounded conscience, while it might have been discovered to a Jew by this method, could never have approved itself to the "Gentile mind" had there not been something efficacious in the remedy itself. The testimony of prophecy was nothing to the Greeks. The testimony of the Resurrection was "madness" to the Romans.<sup>3</sup> And yet, in spite of all this, we find that in a few years this doctrine of Christ crucified had become to many thousands throughout the entire known world "the power of God and the wisdom of God."<sup>4</sup> There can be but one explanation of this, that there was something in the Cross itself to speak peace to the sin-stained conscience, and that it was through the sacrifice of Jesus as the Lamb of God that men came to be convinced not merely of God's love but of His forgiving love.

And of course this is so. The most classic case of "the forgiveness of sins" in Christian experience is that told in the conversion of Luther. In that experience, we are told, the only medicine that brought healing to his sin-sick conscience was "the apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ" as that mercy was revealed in the suffer-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xxiv. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xxvi. 24.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. i. 24.

ings of the Cross. "Look to the sufferings of Jesus Christ," said Staupitz to the trembling monk, "look to the blood He has shed for you ; it is in these the grace of God will appear to you. In place of making yourself a martyr on account of your faults, throw yourself into the arms of the Redeemer. Trust in Him, in the uprightness of His life, in the expiation of His death."<sup>1</sup> Shortly after, when an aged brother repeated the Credo, Luther stopped him at the words, "I believe in the remission of sins." "Ah, yes," replied the monk, "but it is not only necessary in the case of David or of Peter. We must believe they are remitted to ourselves." Luther did so believe, and from this moment light shone into his soul.<sup>2</sup>

It was out of this experience that he could write afterwards :

"If I, being a wretch and damned sinner, could be redeemed by any other price, what needed the Son of God to be given? But because there was no other price, therefore He delivered neither sheep, ox, gold, nor silver, but even God Himself, entirely and wholly 'for me,' even 'for me, a miserable wretched sinner.' Now therefore I take comfort and apply this to myself. And this manner of applying is the very true force and power of faith. For He died not to justify the righteous, but the unrighteous, and to make them the children of God."<sup>3</sup>

We have dwelt on Luther, because his is a classic experience ; but we need hardly say it has been reproduced by tens of thousands in every age and in every church. It is doing no injustice to other views to call this the Catholic doctrine of the Cross, since both Catholic and Protestant alike are agreed that this is the only true remedy for a sin-sick conscience. "The great saints who have spread

<sup>1</sup> D'Aubigné, *History of the Reformation*, bk. ii. ch. iii. Eng. tr., p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 113.

<sup>3</sup> *Commentary on Galatians*, ch. ii. v. 20, abridged.

abroad Christ's name and hazarded their lives for His sake, whose sanctity has been persuasive Gospel or compelling Epistle, have all stood at the foot of the Cross. The millions who have had a common experience of pardon, peace, and purity,

‘Ascribe their victory to the Lamb,  
Their triumph to His death.’”<sup>1</sup>

These saints have been at one in their ascription of this efficacy to the Cross, and they have been no less at one in explaining what that efficacy consisted in. They have had no difficulty in making the love of God “intelligible.” They saw in that Cross the divine sacrifice of God Himself for the sins of those He sought to save. They saw in Christ crucified the Lamb of God on whom was laid their iniquity. They realized that by His stripes they were healed because on Him was laid the iniquity of them all. In other words, they accepted the explanation written by Paul and Peter and John, written broad and deep across all their letters, that “Him who knew no sin, He made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”<sup>2</sup>

This, we say, is a fact of Christian experience, and they who refuse to accept the Catholic doctrine are placed in a difficult position. They have against them not only the plain meaning of the New Testament, but the experience of the saints in every age. Yet it would be useless to deny that many modern minds to-day, whom it would be uncharitable in the last degree to rule out of the congregation of the faithful, find it impossible to accept it. With Ritschl they feel it a contradiction to the Fatherhood of God. They point persistently to the Prodigal Son, and demand a forgiveness conditioned by atonement. This is not the place to enter on a discussion of such difficulties. We have only to deal with facts, the facts of experience.

But as regards the doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood,

<sup>1</sup> Professor Clow, *Cross in Christian Experience*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. v. 21.



we have only this to say, that when rightly conceived no true Fatherhood can exist that is not based on a sense of Righteousness. As Dr. Dale has excellently put it in his great work: "The eternal law of Righteousness demands that sin ought to be punished. The will of God is identified both by the conscience and the religious interests with the eternal law of Righteousness. To separate the ideal law from the divine person is to bring darkness and chaos on the spiritual universe."<sup>1</sup>

With this view of the Divine Forgiveness our attitude, to sin as a *disease* and to salvation as its *remedy*, coincides; for it emphasizes the fact that though forgiveness is a personal act, it must work in harmony with law. Salvation can only be effected by working in harmony with the laws which the Creator has made. And one of these is that sin must be punished. Therefore there can be no remission of sin and no sense on the part of the transgressor that sin has been remitted without the consciousness that satisfaction has been made for these sins, that their guilt has been assumed by another, and that their debt has been cancelled.

It has been objected to this, that remission of sin does not actually mean escape from its consequences, and that both the Bible and human experience alike testify that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." But the objection rests on a confusion between the spiritual and the moral consequences of sin. In so far as the former is concerned, the Divine Forgiveness does annul the past. The Divine favour is restored; the Divine love flows back upon the soul like a healing tide, and the disease of sin is destroyed at its source and centre. But as regards the other results of sin the case is different. We do believe that in time even these will be mitigated and finally altogether removed. But for long, in many cases perhaps as long as life lasts, these will partially remain. The remedy of sin must be given time to effect its salvatory effects. What we are sure of is that the

<sup>1</sup> *The Atonement*, by R. W. Dale, p. 391.

greatest of its evils will be removed. The loss of the God-consciousness will be repaired. The soul will be brought back into the life-giving stream of the love of God. Reconciliation will be effected.

Such are the three ways in which the Cross may be said to be "God's remedy for sin." From our account it cannot be doubted which of the three we regard as the most important. The third, both in what it does when once it is "received" by faith and in its after effects as an energy of the soul promoting love and penitence and holy fear, is beyond all question the pre-eminent. Yet it would be wrong to belittle the value of the other two and to deny them a saving efficacy. As we have more than once pointed out, there are periods in life and certain types of spiritual experience in which the sense of sin is not deeply felt at the beginning of the religious life. It is in these cases that the first or the second attitude to the Cross is the one which makes its most natural appeal. It is unwise to sit in judgment on those who thus "find" Christ, as if they had not found Him. This is surely "to make sad those whom the Lord has not made sad." The end of faith is to bring the soul into touch with God, to fill it with His love; and in so far as these other pathways up the hill of Calvary bring the soul into that experience, we may surely rejoice in their achievement, believing that though there is but one wicket-gate that leads into life there may be many pathways up the hill that lead to that wicket-gate.

## CHAPTER VI

### SPIRITUAL CONVALESCENCE

**I**N the foregoing chapters we have been considering the arrest of sin, either by the gradual development of Christian education or by the more sudden experiences of conversion. We have now to look at the line of growth following on this regenerative process. It is known by the Church under the term of *sanctification*, and its operations may be divided into two classes of experience—a *deliverance from the power of sin* and a *development of Christian character*. This is well brought out in the definition of it given in the Westminster Shorter Catechism, where it is described as “a work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man and are enabled, more and more, to die unto sin and live unto righteousness.”<sup>1</sup>

These two elements are here clearly marked off—a *process of death* and a *process of growth*—the “dying to sin” and the “living to righteousness.” They are, of course, closely connected in Christian experience. As a man throws off a disease, he naturally grows in vigour and weight. Nevertheless, the growth of the spiritual convalescent is much more far-reaching than that of the physical. His recovery from sin is due to the entrance of a new principle of life, which has in it the power of an infinite development—“the power of an endless life”;<sup>2</sup> and the goal at which it aims is no mere deliverance from disease but the “perfection” of “a full-grown man, after the image of Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Shorter Catechism*, Question 35.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. vii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. iv. 13.



It is well to make a clear distinction between these two processes of convalescence and growth, as a confusion of them often causes serious perplexity both to him who is the subject of sanctification and to those who watch its effects with critical and sometimes unfriendly eyes. Thus one who is truly regenerated may be seriously discouraged by finding that his "growth in grace" is not accompanied by that complete immunity to sin which he expected to gain, and he may be tempted on that account to give up the struggle as a hopeless quest. On the other hand, a man who has gained an immediate immunity to past sins may on that account be "exalted above measure," and declare that he has already reached "perfection's sacred height," while to those around him he may seem very far indeed from that altitude.

It is probably this failure to distinguish things which differ, that has led to the "perfectionist" controversies, so bitter in the past and not unknown to-day. In our authorized translation of the Bible the word "perfect" is indiscriminately applied to both these phenomena, and this has probably increased the confusion. Thus Paul usually employs the word *τέλειος*, or "perfect," in the sense of full-grown—as opposed to *νήπιος*, or "infant." "Till we all attain," he says, "unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."<sup>1</sup> There is, however, no reason to believe that he regarded this ideal to be absolutely attainable in this life. For to the Philippians he writes, when now far on in life: "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect; but I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus."<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, there is a perfection of spiritual health, which consists in an immunity to known sin, that seems to be regarded by Scripture not only as something possible to saints in this life but one which it is their duty to strive after. Thus Jesus says, in the Sermon on the Mount, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, even as your Father which

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. iii. 12.

is in heaven is perfect,"<sup>1</sup> where the reference is clearly to conduct and character in this life.

That such immunity to old temptations constitutes an absolutely sinless perfection, we do not believe; but that it points to a condition of spiritual health very different from that which makes daily sinning an inevitable necessity is evident. We can see what Christian holiness implies from the analogy of physical convalescence. Let us suppose a man is in the way of recovery from a serious disease. For a considerable time he is weak, liable to relapse; even, if not carefully treated, to a fatal relapse. He has therefore to follow his physician's instructions as to medicine, diet, environment, until he has reached the stage of convalescence. Thereafter he is advised to "take a change," to go to some "convalescent home," in order to "harden up" before returning to face the trying situations of his daily work. Finally, however, he is pronounced well. He is reasonably immune to an onset of his old trouble or to an attack of a new one. He has become a healthy man.

It is in this way we would regard "perfection," when the word is used in the sense of immunity to sin. Holiness is healthiness, and such a condition should be possible to the spiritual man. It is the attainment of this we are considering in the present chapter. The other side of sanctification—that of growth in character or development into a full-grown man—does not come under the purview of this essay so much, inasmuch as we are dealing here rather with Christianity as a system of remedy. We shall, however, refer to it later on in the closing chapter on "eternal life."

Regarding, then, sanctification as a *spiritual convalescence from the disease of sin*, we have to inquire in the first instance in what this immunity to temptation consists. Now in this inquiry we may gain a certain amount of light from the investigations which medical science has made in recent years in regard to physical immunity.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 48,

Starting with the fortuitous discoveries of Jenner, this study has been greatly advanced by the researches of Pasteur, Virchow, Mentzschikoff, and others. It is not, of course, our purpose to pursue these in any detail; but a reference to them is of value both as an illumination and corroboration of the Christian doctrine of sanctification. Curiously enough, we have recently come across a little work by a Christian doctor in which the same analogy is pointed out and some practical lessons deduced therefrom.<sup>1</sup> It is true that his book would have been more valuable had the author betrayed a larger acquaintance with Psychology and Theology. Still, his speculations have an interest to all who would trace natural laws in the spiritual world, and his conclusions are often wise and always reverent.

Physical immunity, Dr. Leighton points out, may be *natural* or *acquired*. Some organisms are *naturally immune* to germs which find a ready access to others. Thus swine-fever is innocuous to man. Small-pox is in the cow a trifling affection. Yellow fever is more dangerous to the white races than to the black. On the other hand, the white man makes a better fight against tuberculosis or sleeping-sickness.

There is none of this *natural immunity* in man to sin. No doubt some natures are more prone to certain temptations than others. Alcoholism is a striking illustration of such variation. These lines of cleavage in the armour of the soul are no doubt often due to hereditary taints. Hence some think that the sociologist should be brought in to help the evangelist by forbidding the marriage of the unfit and thus raising the moral immunity of the race. This is the aim of Eugenics—"the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations, either physically or mentally."<sup>2</sup> It is, however, a line of treatment which, though it may be of value in limiting the depredations of

<sup>1</sup> *The Greatest Life*, by Gerald Leighton, M.D.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Francis Galton,



certain physico-spiritual disorders, is obviously Utopian as a scheme for counteracting the disease of sin. We should have to debar the whole race from parentage in order to look for any radical cure from that quarter.

The other immunity is *acquired*. One attack of certain diseases confers on the patient a longer or shorter immunity. It was this fact, of course, which led Sir William Jenner to his discovery of vaccination as a remedy for small-pox. Is there any reason to believe that there is a spiritual counterpart to this law of physical immunity? Dr. Leighton thinks there is, in the aversion produced towards certain temptations in a man who after a great struggle has been rescued from them. It is doubtful, however, whether we have here more than the law of reaction, due to the sense of horror produced on the mind of him who has been saved from imminent death. At all events, Dr. Leighton very properly agrees that no Christian thinker would suggest a deliberate plunge into sin as a wise prescription for acquiring immunity to it. We may sometimes see it indeed exemplified in the godless creed that the best husbands and the most sober citizens are those who "sow their wild oats in their youth and then settle down." This, however, would indeed be "doing evil that good may come," and experience proves that while in a few cases a plunge into sensuality is followed by a salutary revulsion, in the vast majority of instances the taste thus acquired is sufficient to overcome any reluctance aroused by a sensitive conscience and leads only to further and deeper submersion in sensual excess.

There is, however, *another acquired immunity* with which medicine has in recent years become acquainted. This is *the method of inoculating the diseased blood* with serums formed by the action of these diseases in other animals. By the introduction of these into the system, the patient, after a certain *malaise* due to toxic infection, becomes safe from attacks of the malady from whose action they are formed. If not absolutely immune, he can at least more successfully resist them.

Such an immunity, says Dr. Leighton, may be suddenly or gradually acquired. The sudden process is seen in the serum treatment of diphtheria. It has this disadvantage, that its effect is transient and confers immunity only for a week or two. Nevertheless, the source is always available and the supply unlimited.

The gradual immunity, again, is gained "by becoming possessed of some antagonizing influence or by establishing a habit of tolerance." Its advantage is that, once possessed, its effect is permanent, or at least for a long time. It is not, however, immediately curative, and is rather a method of prevention than cure. But "prevention is always better than cure," and a wise physician would therefore advise such a method of inoculation to any one who was likely to be subject to infection in his daily work.<sup>1</sup>

Is there any counterpart to this in the spiritual world? Dr. Leighton thinks there is. The sudden change of character produced in conversion is "the immunity obtained by a profound mental and emotional impression, which manifests itself immediately in an altered course of action. It is," he however adds, "a commonplace of observation that such sudden changes are usually followed by a relapse into an old course of action." Accordingly, he favours the second process of divine inoculation: "those of whom it could never be said that they became converted, but nevertheless show a constant and gradual progress towards a higher life. . . . One after another of their harmful tendencies are eliminated and in their place are substituted a number of susceptibilities to good. No sudden transition has taken place, no hysterical manifestation or emotion, but a gradual process culminating in the high ideal of acquired immunity."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Leighton seems to think that these two processes of sanctification are mutually exclusive, but in point of fact both may quite well take place in the same person. A crisis of sudden inoculation of divine truth may quite

<sup>1</sup> *The Spiritual Life*, by Gerald Leighton, M.D., p. 269 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Op.* pp. 270, 271 (compressed).

well be and often is succeeded by a slow process of spiritual assimilation of the truth thus immediately received. Nor is he correct in his assumption that sudden conversions are usually followed by relapses. Professor Starbuck has proved by statistics that a great majority of such cases turn out well, and while our own observation does not lead us to take such an optimistic view, we would say that at least 50 per cent. of such conversions lead to a better life.

With his general conclusion, however, that *immunity to the power of old temptations can only be produced by the absorption of the divine life into the soul, either by crisis or by process*, we are in hearty agreement. To this the Apostle John bears witness when he says, "Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin; for His seed"—serum is the Latin synonym—"remaineth in him and he cannot sin."<sup>1</sup> That such a condition is one of absolute sinlessness the apostle denies when he says in the same epistle, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."<sup>2</sup> What is obviously meant is that so long as a man remains under the influence of this divine power he is able to deal successfully with these old temptations to which he formerly succumbed. Dwelling "in the secret place of the Most High," he can tread on "the lion and the adder" and trample "the young lion and the dragon under foot."<sup>3</sup> In a word, he becomes immune so long as he thus "abides." He develops into a condition of spiritual health.

The beginning of this development may be marked by a crisis not unlike that of conversion, or it may be a gradual and largely unconscious process, mediated by the use of the ordinary "means of grace" to which we shall refer in succeeding chapters.

The Methodist Church and what is popularly known in England as the Keswick School lay great stress on *the importance of a crisis in the experience of sanctifying faith*. This is the view largely taken by Mr. Starbuck in his

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John i. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. xci. 13.



*Psychology of Sanctification.* He indeed admits that there are two conceptions of it in the Evangelical Church—"that which regards it as a gradual development following upon regeneration," and that which looks on it "as an instantaneous act."<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, however, the cases he examines are almost all—forty-eight out of fifty-one—taken from the latter category, and have therefore only a modified value for the Protestant Church as a whole.

He defines sanctification as "the step taken, usually after much striving and discontent, by which the personality is finally identified with the spiritual life, which at conversion existed merely as a hazy possibility."<sup>2</sup> This step is usually of the nature of a crisis, not unlike that experienced at conversion, save that faith in it comes more prominently before the consciousness as an act of self-surrender to the Holy Spirit's influence. The space of time between the two events greatly varies. They ranged (in his inquiries) from two months to forty years. More than half the cases occurred either before the first year or after twenty years had elapsed since conversion. In all there was a period of spiritual disharmony antecedent to the crisis. Thus one writes, "I experienced temptations, and was discontented. I did not feel I was in accord with Christian standards. I felt dissatisfied and was filled with unrest." Another says, "At times I had a fear of death, and wondered if there were not an experience beyond this that I could attain." A third says, "I had a longing for a steadier and more satisfactory experience."<sup>3</sup>

During this period the patient is led through prayer or attendance of "Holiness" meetings to the conviction that there is such a rest to be found and that it is to be reached through a more whole-hearted consecration of the soul and all its powers to the keeping of the Holy Spirit. Such texts as, "The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions,"<sup>4</sup> "There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology of Religion*, p. 376.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* pp. 384, 385.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 384.

<sup>4</sup> Obad. ver. 17.

the people of God,"<sup>1</sup> are dwelt on, in the sense that by such a surrender *that which was given in promise at conversion can at once be made real by consecration*. Under such teaching it is not wonderful that a crisis takes place, often as real if not more so than the first. The soul does anew surrender itself to the power of God; this surrender being often made more practical by the sacrifice of some sinful or dangerous indulgence, with the result that a "second blessing," as it is called, is experienced. A sudden loosening seems to take place in the bonds of the inner life. The Spirit of God floods the soul with new power, as a tide rushes into a canal when the gates of the sea-locks are opened, and things before impossible are easily accomplished.

"Sanctification," says one, "removed from within my heart all sense of depravity, weakness, and fear, making the service of God a delight. I had more courage and strength to discharge Christian duty. It far exceeded in depth and fullness the first blessing." The experience is often as definite in time as that of conversion. "I was walking over the fields alone, and was suddenly filled with the most marvellous power." Another was so powerfully influenced that, while going home from a meeting, he knelt down on the dark street to pray. "Suddenly the darkness of the night seemed lit up. I felt, realized, knew that God had answered my prayer, and a feeling of sweet peace and satisfaction came over me." A third says, "I made a complete consecration of all I had and all I was to God. I felt that God had accepted my offering, and that all sin was taken out of my heart."<sup>2</sup>

Practically the same view is taken by the Keswick School in England. Thus Bishop Moule sums up its teaching in the phrase, "holiness by faith." Holiness is "the state of character conditioned by surrender to the will of God and by conformity to that will resulting from the surrender." Faith is "trust reposed in another. It is the attitude of quiet confidence in Him as able to keep

<sup>1</sup> Heb. iv. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* pp. 378, 379.

His promises and willing to do so. It is the look and action of one who, discovering that the disorders of his soul are too much for him, turns in the confidence of self-despair to Him who is 'able to subdue all things to Himself,' and gives over the problem into His hands."<sup>1</sup>

This "giving over" necessarily involves a conscious crisis, and we are therefore not surprised to learn that the consequence of such teaching was "many testimonies of a practical deliverance from the power of sin and lasting blessing found in the keeping power of Christ, which formed so new and blessed an experience that many spoke of it as a 'second conversion.' Though that phrase was never adopted by the speakers, yet it was quite natural under the circumstances, especially in view of the similar way the two blessings came to be received."<sup>2</sup> To the same effect, the Rev. Evan Hopkins, one of the leaders of the movement, once described the Keswick doctrine of sanctification (in a conversation with the writer) as a "crisis followed by a process."

With all respect for these writers, we cannot but think that in this insistence of a "crisis," there is an error. We have no doubt that in many cases of retarded growth into holiness it has been a valuable message resulting in changed lives. It has been so because the teaching which, as Bishop Moule has said, is at the root of it—holiness by faith—is a true teaching. Faith, as we have pointed out again and again, is essentially receptive. It is a passivity in its inception, the opening of the sluice-gates of the soul to the incoming of the life of God. No doubt the result of this is a new activity. "No will is so constituted for activity as the surrendered will, and in this matter of sanctification the will has abundant work to do in watching and prayer, in self-examination and confession, in diligent study of the divine word and the spiritual use of sacred ordinances."<sup>3</sup> Still, the object of all these activities

<sup>1</sup> *The Keswick Convention*, edited by Charles Harford, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. Hubert Brooke in same work, p. 79.

<sup>3</sup> *Christian Doctrine*, by Bishop Moule, p. 193 (abridged).



is simply to bring the will to its true resting-place: obedience to Christ, the resting on Him and Him only as the secret of the believer's strength and hope.

This is the view of sanctification taken by all the leaders of the Christian faith. St. Paul strikes the keynote when he says, "Work out your own salvation . . . for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for His good pleasure."<sup>1</sup>

To the same effect, Dean Goulburn, an author at the opposite pole of theological thought to the Keswick School, writes: "It is erroneously inferred that sanctification is carried on much more independently of Christ than justification is; that human effort, will, and exertion contribute very mainly to it, and that Christ is not the all in all of it, nor our strength in the same way and to the same extent as He is our righteousness. Holiness is supposed to be an achievement, mastered at length much as a lesson is mastered by a variety of exercises, prayers, fastings, meditations, alms-deeds, self-discipline, sacraments—a sort of permanent acquisition which goes on increasing as the stock of these spiritual exercises accumulates. It is not regarded in its true light as a momentary receiving out of Christ's fullness, grace for grace, as the result of His inworking in a heart which finds the task of self-renewal hopeless, and makes itself over to Him to be moulded by His plastic hands."<sup>2</sup>

To this testimony we may add the words of an old but justly esteemed writer, Marshall, the author of the *Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*. Men "commonly think," says this divine, "that they must get an holy frame by producing it anew in themselves and by forming it out of their own hearts. On this account they acknowledge the entrance into a godly life to be harsh and unpleasing, because it costs so much struggling with their own hearts and affections to new frame them. If they knew that this way of holiness is not only harsh but impossible, that the

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 12, 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Thoughts on Personal Religion*, part i. ch. iii.

true way of mortifying sin is by receiving a new nature out of the fullness of Christ, they would save themselves many a bitter agony and employ their endeavours to enter in at the strait gate in such a way as would be more pleasant and successful.”<sup>1</sup>

There is therefore no question as to what the New Testament teaches on the secret and method of sanctification. It is a putting on of “the new man, which after God *hath been created* in righteousness and holiness of truth”;<sup>2</sup> and while this demands a constant activity of the will “in keeping open and enlarging the avenues of the heart towards Christ,”<sup>3</sup> the soul is essentially passive, working under the power of an unseen Presence within, the Holy Spirit.

Yet, while all this is true, and we are much indebted to the Wesleyan theologians in the past and the leaders of the Keswick movement to-day for the way in which they have brought it out so clearly, we cannot agree with them in their insistence on a “crisis” as the necessary preliminary to the “process” of spiritual renewal. No doubt, as we have said, in many cases, such a crisis is of the highest importance (among those who have been long under the power of indwelling sin); nevertheless, the insistence on a “second conversion” as the normal method of sanctification seems to us erroneous and often mischievous. The same objections which we urged against the demand for catastrophic experiences in conversion apply to that which looks for a similar method in sanctification. In point of fact, as Professor Starbuck points out, it is those who have had a “first conversion” of this kind who most often require a “second conversion” of the same character. Their temperament is of the emotional order, which goes forward by “crises” and “experiences” rather than by the unconscious processes of spiritual growth. That these processes may, however, be none the less vital is brought out by Christ Himself when He likens spiritual

<sup>1</sup> Marshall, *Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*, ch. iii. (abridged).

<sup>2</sup> Eph. iv. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Goulburn, *op. cit.*, part i. ch. iii.

growth to *the gradual germination of a seed in the ground*. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how; first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear."<sup>1</sup> In this parable, sanctification is likened to a growth, not only quiet and unnoticed, but often necessarily secret, whose workings it would be unwise to probe too curiously.

To insist on a cast-iron process of *conviction, renunciation* and *consecration* as the necessary preliminaries to a healthy spiritual life on the part of those who are day by day following Christ and putting on the new man by the ordinary means of grace, is not unlike the child's habit of pulling up the seed to see how it is growing. We must remember that the Spirit of God is a Spirit of "liberty," and that He freely works in men's hearts according to the materials He finds there. Harriet Auber, in her well-known hymn of the Holy Spirit, has well pointed out the diversity of these operations.

"He came in tongues of living flame,  
To teach, convince, subdue;  
*All-powerful as the wind He came,*  
As viewless too.

And His that gentle voice we hear,  
*Soft as the breath of even,*  
That checks each fault, that calms each fear,  
And speaks of heaven."

The danger of insisting on a crisis as the *sine qua non* of sanctification is that it tends to fanaticism on the one side and censoriousness on the other. The presence of the Holy Spirit is apt to be believed in only as it leads to those overpowering emotions and short-cuts to holiness which we have seen described in Professor Starbuck's "Questionnaires." Hence, if these do not come, the patient is apt to enter on a disciplinary process of renunciation which may pass into an unintelligent asceticism.

Life becomes narrowed by the cutting away of innocent

<sup>1</sup> Mark iv. 26-28.



enjoyment and even a broad and generous culture, with the result that a condition is reached not unlike the excesses of early monachism. Along with this also there is developed a spirit of censoriousness in regard to all those who do not follow in the same path of renunciation.

We remember once hearing a speaker at a "Holiness" meeting discoursing on the words, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." As an illustration of the true method of holiness, he told of a man who had sacrificed everything he could think of, in order to attain to inward peace. Being still "unblessed," he came to the speaker, who discovered after close examination of him that he had a fondness for collecting postage-stamps. He was told to sacrifice this, on the ground that it was "not of faith," and in doing so at once obtained rest.

Professor Starbuck mentions an extreme instance of this type of fanaticism in an old woman of sixty-eight he often visited. She had been a member of one of the most active and progressive churches in a large city. Her pastor described her as having reached "the censorious stage." "She had grown more and more out of sympathy with the church. Her connection with it finally consisted simply in attendance at prayer-meeting, at which her only message was that of reproof and condemnation of the others for living on a low plane. At last she withdrew from all fellowship with any church. The writer found her living alone in a little room on the top storey of a boarding-house, quite out of touch with all human relations, but apparently happy in the enjoyment of her own spiritual blessings. Her time was occupied in writing booklets on sanctification—page after page of dreamy rhapsody."<sup>1</sup>

In condemning these excesses, we must not indeed be held as censuring the message which they distort, that the pathway to spiritual health is often only to be found by renunciation. In a succeeding chapter we shall deal with the place of spiritual surgery in the higher life. But it must always be clearly kept in mind that it is

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology of Religion*, p. 389.

what is diseased that must so be sacrificed. A maiming of the spiritual life for its own sake is no part of Christ's teaching, and while this has never been favoured by the best teachers of the Keswick School it is an undoubted fact that some have been led by its influence to the sacrifice of their intellectual and æsthetic faculties in a way which leaves the soul seriously marred and the life unduly narrowed.

To sum up, the secret of spiritual convalescence is the realization that *faith is a receptive act* and that the essence of it lies in *putting on Christ* from day to day, by abiding in Him until the soul incorporates His Spirit into itself and can say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." It is in this "mystical union" that immunity to sin is to be found. So long as the soul remains in it, it is safe from all attacks. "He that abideth in Him sinneth not." But such a condition is often one of extreme difficulty. It can only be won by the slow and constant discipline of the soul, by the use of those "means of grace" by which the divine life is appropriated by the human.

Of these means we shall speak in the succeeding chapters. Meanwhile we may note that its process is by no means of a uniform type. It varies with every case, and it is in the last degree dangerous to set up one type as the standard for every experience to conform to. As in physical convalescence, the conditions vary infinitely according to the disease under which the patient suffers and the condition of body in which he is; so in the spiritual there is no one path into which we can force the soul and say, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

Sometimes a high degree of sanctification can be gained *per saltum*, by a leap forward, through some great vivifying experience; but in other cases the soul may have to pass through a long painful struggle in which at times no progress may seem possible, nay at times only a progress backward.

Perhaps these times of seeming relapse in spiritual

convalescence are pointed to, in the parable of the "Blade, the Ear, and the Full-corn," to which we have referred. "While the Blade may be supposed to mirror the *first triumphant days* of spiritual discipleship, and while the Full-corn as obviously refers to the *maturity of Christian character*, there is sometimes a period between the two symbolized by the Ear, when the tenderness of Spring has passed away and the glory of Autumn has not arrived. This is often a time of *darkness of soul*, and the subject of it is sometimes tempted to doubt the reality of his faith. The fruit of the Spirit tastes very acid at this stage. It is that phase in the believer's history whereof Newton sings, when his prayers for growth 'in faith and love and every grace' are answered in such a way as often 'drives one to despair.' The author of the hymn describes it as an answer to his prayer for growth, and so it really is. The green ear, the crude fruit, is really a stage in advance of the blossom which looks so much better. No one looking at an apple tree after the blossom has deadened and the fruit sets, thinks of remarking, 'What a degeneration!' But men are very apt to commit such a mistake in regard to spiritual growth. The tendency is to regard the transition from the blossom to the green fruit as a declension from grace."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Bruce's remarks are wise, however we may regard them as an interpretation of the parable. There is a stage in Christian growth which often looks like retrogression, while it is not really so. It is dangerous for the soul at such a time to sit in judgment on its feelings. Let it pursue the path divinely ordered by the Great Physician, in the faith that what seems to be doing no good is really achieving its purpose, and that,

"While the tired waves vainly breaking,  
Seem here no painful inch to gain;  
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,  
Comes silent, flooding in, the main."

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<sup>1</sup> *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, by Professor A. B. Bruce, p. 137.



## CHAPTER VII

### PRAYER AS A MEDICINE OF THE SOUL

WE have seen that the secret of spiritual convalescence is to be found in the receptiveness of faith. Sanctification is the work of God's Spirit. It consists in letting Nature work out her own remedies : only Nature here is God. To let God do His work, to keep open the avenues of the higher life ; this is the secret of peace, health and growth.

But this "receptiveness" requires activity ; nay, activity of the highest kind. "Abide in Me," says Christ. Christ's abiding in us depends on our abiding in Him. And to do this is the difficulty. The German mystic expressed a common experience when he said :

"Thy secret voice invites me still  
The sweetness of Thy yoke to prove ;  
And fain I would ; but, though my will  
Seem fixed, yet wide my passions rove ;  
Yet hindrances strow all the way :  
I aim at Thee, yet from Thee stray."<sup>1</sup>

How shall we correct this roving tendency in the spiritual life ? The answer brings us to a consideration of these "means of grace," as the older divines called them ; or of the *Materia Medica* of Faith, as we may more fitly describe them here, which promote spiritual receptiveness. They are many ; but the chief are undoubtedly Meditative Prayer, Common Worship, the Holy Communion and Self-renunciation, and to these only we propose to devote attention here.

<sup>1</sup> *Terstegen*, translated by Miss Winkworth.

Of them all the most important is secret and meditative prayer. As Sabatier says: "Prayer is religion in act; that is to say, real religion. Religion is nothing if it is not the vital act by which the whole spirit seeks to attach itself to its principle. This act is prayer; by which I mean, not an empty utterance of words, not the repetition of certain sacred formulas; but the movement of the soul putting itself into personal relation and contact with the mysterious Power whose Presence it feels. Where this inward prayer is wanting there is no religion. On the other hand, wherever this prayer springs up in the soul and moves it, even in the absence of all forms and doctrines clearly defined, there is true religion."<sup>1</sup>

We are not here concerned with material answers to prayer. Our subject is the spiritual or medicinal value of it. We may, however, note in passing, that the *possibility of such answers* is a vital element in a truly believing prayer. If the free agency of God to answer prayer be denied, the effect on the soul's attitude as it approaches Him is serious. Prayer becomes indeed, as Spinoza said, an impiety, since if the Divine Will, as mirrored in Nature, is unchangeably good, our only worthy feeling towards it must be one of absolute resignation. The only prayer left us is "Thy will be done"; and if this be all, its monotonous recitation will soon become a weariness. As Wendland says: "Prayer must gradually fall silent, if under the semblance of speaking to God, we are only exerting a wholesome influence on ourselves."<sup>2</sup>

But while true prayer must begin with petition, as it advances such petitions will gradually fall out of sight. The spirit soars. It rises into those heights where the needs of the body are forgotten and communion of heart to heart alone remains. It is to this highest form of prayer—meditative prayer, or, as an Italian writer has called it,

<sup>1</sup> *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, book i. ch. iii.

<sup>2</sup> *Miracles and Christianity*, Eng. tr., p. 196.

mystic prayer,<sup>1</sup> that we refer when we deal here with the purifying and cleansing side of prayer.

(1) The first of these purifying effects, if the prayer be effectual, is that of *penitence*. God and sin cannot dwell in the heart, and hence the closer the soul gets to God the more it feels its own uncleanness and desires to be rid of it. Unless this desire be given expression to, prayer sticks in the throat and refuses to ascend the golden ladder.

“My words fly up, my thoughts remain below ;  
Words without thoughts will never to heaven go.”

When, however, the “words” are made the sincere expression of thoughts behind them—thoughts of repentance and reparation—then they become more than words. They have a reactive effect on him who uses them, stiffening the soul into amendment and hastening it into action. Hence the value of putting our prayers into definite words, and even (if there be a secret place for such devotions) of repeating them aloud. The prophet Hosea says, “Take with you *words* and return unto the Lord.”<sup>2</sup> There is a value in the articulation of our aspirations and emotions. Such words are not idle. They are powerful causes as well as effects of true contrition, and bring the soul into that attitude of penitence in which alone God can fully bless it.

We have frequent examples of this in the Psalms. Often, as in Ps. cxxx., the Psalmist comes into the presence of God in the very “depths” of despair. “If the Lord should mark iniquity, who should stand?” But as the words of his confession proceed he rises into an atmosphere of faith and hope, and finally the cry from the depths is lost in a song from the heights.

<sup>1</sup> “Practise the mystic prayer, which is the purest faith, the most perfect hope and charity ; which in itself purifies the soul” (*The Saint*, by Antonio Fogazzaro, Eng. tr., p. 390).

<sup>2</sup> Hos. xiv. 2.



(2) A second medicinal value of prayer is the *mental peace* into which, when prosecuted with earnest persistence, it conducts the soul. Prayer is the best antidote of worry. As Cardinal Newman says: "Indisposition of body shows itself in a pain somewhere or other, a distress which draws our thoughts to it, centres them upon it, impedes our ordinary way of going on, and throws the mind off its balance. Such too is indisposition of the soul of whatever sort, be it passion or affection, hope or fear, joy or grief. It ruffles us and makes us restless. In a word, it is an excitement of mind. Excitements are the indisposition of the mind; and of these excitements the services of divine worship are the proper antidotes."<sup>1</sup>

Newman's reference is specially to the common worship of the sanctuary; but what is true of common worship is no less true of individual prayer. The secret of the calm that thus comes to the soul is partly due to the sense of elevation which it gives to the spirit. "When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I."<sup>2</sup> As we rise on the wings of devotion, we seem to see things in a new proportion due to an extended horizon. The difficulties that were so formidable when down in the valleys of life are now realized to be mere mole-hills, not worth a thought or care.

There is, however, also reason to believe that there is *subconscious action* in the relief which thus comes to the troubled soul in prayer. This is suggested by the mysterious suddenness with which it often arrives. Something seems to break in the tension of the mind. The soul suddenly finds itself in a new atmosphere, and marvels at its own deliverance. No doubt the Spirit of God is at work here; but God works by natural laws, and we have already seen that one of these is that in man's subconscious life lies a richness and depth and continuity with the Divine which is not to be found in his conscious life, absorbed and distracted as it is with the cares and worries of the moment.

<sup>1</sup> *Plain and Parochial Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 337.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lxi. 2.

Certain it is, however we explain it, that this is one of the most frequent illustrations of the healing power of prayer. It needs, however, to be usually a prolonged effort if it is to have this effect. One must "wait upon God," as the Psalmists so often say. And sometimes the soul is so weak and distressed that it has not the power to wait. It tosses restlessly back upon itself, and prayer becomes an impossibility. It is here that the value of prayer *by another*—or, as we might call it, *clinical* prayer—is seen. The prayer that is offered up at a bedside may be likened to the couch of the paralytic who was *borne of four* into the presence of Jesus. The palsied man could not bring himself there; and so the sick patient, burdened with cares and fears, cannot always reach the "Rock that is higher." But a wise spiritual physician may do this for him, and thus bring him into the altitude of blessing.

It is valuable to remember this, as there is a temptation to-day to pretermitt bedside intercessions. The minister is afraid lest prayer will terrify the sick man or destroy the natural flow of human intercourse. "Will not a cheerful conversation on secular matters be more helpful than a solemn prayer?" Sometimes, doubtless, it will, and a wise tactfulness has always to be used in such cases. But, as a rule, the spiritual practitioner, when he enters a house, should remember that he is not there to perform the part of an ordinary visitor, but comes to bring spiritual healing. We never know how much such may be required. Often a smiling face hides a secret care. Often there is a desire for spiritual help in quarters we should least expect it, and there is disappointment when a minister leaves a home without any word let fall that might help the troubled. Is not this one of the reasons why Christian Scientists are asked in, to minister to minds distressed? Personally, whenever we hear of such cases—as we often do—we feel it to be a serious criticism on the Christian ministry. Let the minister magnify his vocation. Let him believe that "the



prayer of faith shall save him that is sick";<sup>1</sup> and while he may occasionally meet with rebuffs, he will, on the whole, be agreeably surprised by the results which follow from such a ministry.

(3) This brings us to the third medicinal effect of prayer—the *healing of the body through the medium of the soul*—what is now known as *Psychotherapy*.

This side of prayer was fully recognized in the early Church, though the psychological explanation of it was not, of course, understood. The passage in St. James already referred to is well known. It is also mentioned by St. Clement. "Heal the sick," he says, "raise up the weak, encourage the faint-hearted."<sup>2</sup> Justin Martyr also tells of deacons whose special duty it was to care for the sick.<sup>3</sup> No doubt these were expected to discharge their duty by the ordinary means of medical attendance, but, as Harnack proves, *in its early days the Church included both soul and body in its message of "salvation."* It therefore made no distinction between spiritual and material remedies in prosecuting its saving work.

In the Protestant Church this practice has largely fallen into desuetude owing to the superstitions which have gathered round it, and also, it must be admitted, because the science of medicine has made such marvellous advances along the line of natural remedies. The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, retains it as *a possibility*, but limits it to the region of the miraculous, connecting it with such shrines of healing as Lourdes or Loretto.

In our own day, however, there has been a decided tendency to revive a belief in the value of spiritual methods of healing. This is largely due to the growing conception of the value of mind-cure methods. The intimate relation of the mind on the body has been more and more admitted, and Psychotherapy, the science of the treatment of the body through the mind, has been admitted

<sup>1</sup> Jas. v. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *First Epistle of Clement*, ch. ix.

<sup>3</sup> Harnack, *Ausbreitung des Christentums*, Eng. tr., vol. i. p. 148.



to a place in the College curriculums of America and the Continent.

That there is such an influence is proved by the impressive growth of what is known as "Christian Science" in our own day. Without agreeing in the least with the basal conceptions on which this newest of our "heresies" is founded, one cannot but note the fact that in spite of daily contradiction by the most notorious facts of life, in spite of the antagonism it has encountered both from the medical and clerical professions, it lives and thrives. What is the explanation of this? Is it not that it has laid hold of a neglected truth?

Christian Science, as has been said, "does unquestionably bestow certain great benefits on believers. It makes men happy. It improves tempers. It frequently weans men from evil habits. It can reduce or remove pain. It cures certain types of diseases, and it gives courage to endure those which it cannot heal."<sup>1</sup> The leaders of the mind-cure movement, in spite of much crude metaphysics, not a little superstition, and, in some quarters, it is to be feared knavery as well, have laid hold of the truth that spirit does influence matter, that "thoughts are forces," and that the most health-giving of all thoughts is the thought of God.

In America, where this view has recently obtained a wider prominence than in our own land, an experiment has lately been made of wedding Religion and Medicine in a union which should duly conserve the rights of each. This is what is called the "*Emmanuel Church Movement*." The fundamental article of its creed is *the value of prayer as a therapeutic agent*. The founders of it do not, however, like the Christian Scientists, discard medical aid. On the contrary, they welcome it and only seek to Christianize it. They hold that the materialistic conceptions which too often rule it are as unscientific as they are unchristian. With this persuasion they have started in connection with the Emmanuel Church in Boston an institution where the

<sup>1</sup> *Religion and Medicine*, by the Rev. Drs. Worcester and M'Comb, p. 12.

sick can be treated by methods of Christian healing under the management of a regular doctor. It will be his duty to diagnose the case and decide whether it is suitable for the mind-cure movement. If of a neurotic type, he will do so in the affirmative, and the patient will be handed over to the treatment of spiritual and mental remedies. If not, he will be subjected to the ordinary methods of medical administration, but always in a Christian atmosphere—*i.e.* under the recognition that prayer and faith are *always* aids to physical remedies.

Into this association they have been able to persuade an accredited physician to enter, and the account of the experiment is given in the book already quoted, *Religion and Medicine*. The authors of it claim a considerable success; but I have not heard that the movement has made any great progress even in America, while in this land it has hitherto taken no hold.<sup>1</sup> The Church of England, indeed, while sympathizing with the view that faith is a therapeutic agent of high value, has in a report of a special commission discountenanced the movement. The same is true of the British Medical Association, which has had the Emmanuel-Church treatment before it, and disapproved of its methods.

Whatever we may think of such movements—and I must confess I have doubts of their complete sanity, or at least practicability—one cannot but admit that they embody a great truth—*the value of prayer as a therapeutic agent in all diseases, but especially those of a nervous type*.

We see a concrete example of its value in the story of Pastor Hsi of China, written by Mrs. Howard Taylor. This converted Confucian, seeing the terrible ravages of the opium drug around him, and being cured of it himself by the Gospel, resolved to use the same remedy for all the victims of it who would come to him. Now the opium habit is chiefly a disease of the soul, but in its later stages it is also one of the body. To cure the second, Hsi got a pill, made up by the best medical skill he could command,

<sup>1</sup> See Note C.



from the missionaries. For the psychical side he opened up institutions all over his native land, where by prayer and exhortation the will was confirmed and the patient urged to conversion and self-surrender to the keeping power of the Divine Spirit. The movement was for a time a remarkable success, and hundreds of men and women were saved from a horrible death. Unfortunately, in later years the leader of the movement seems to have fallen into fanaticism, discarding medical aid altogether and becoming an ordinary "faith-healer."

The success of such movements teaches us that perhaps the Modern Church has erred in not recognizing enough the therapeutic value of faith. We must confess we have great sympathy with one of the remarks which Drs. Worcester and M'Comb make about the narrowness of the Church's sphere to-day. "In former days," they point out "the Church spread herself over the whole sphere of human life, entering every domain of human activity, leading every great movement of the human spirit." To-day this is largely a thing of the past. "Many people go to church, and they are glad to cultivate pleasant social relations with their minister; but the idea that there is any power in the Church to save them does not occur to them. If they are ill, they send for their physician; if they desire advice, they consult their lawyer; but the clergyman is as a rule excluded from the serious events of life, and this through no discourtesy but through a tacit assumption that there is no help in him. He has even been very largely banished from the sick-room, which used to be his peculiar domain, because he is associated in the mind of the sick with the thought of death, not of life. 'So 'a cried out, God! God! God!—three or four times. Now I, to comfort him, bid him, 'a should not think of God. I hoped there was no need to trouble him with any such thoughts yet.'"<sup>1</sup>

There is much truth in what these writers say about the impotence in and expulsion from the sick-room of the minister, especially among the well-to-do. And with-

<sup>1</sup> *Religion and Medicine*, p. 382.



out denying that the cause is usually to be found in the materialism both of the patient and his medical attendants, there is no doubt that not a little of the blame lies in the minister himself. He should claim as his right the privilege to minister to his sick, and in his prayers he should exercise faith, he should boldly pray for the recovery of his patient and pray for it as if he believed it—believed that God was both willing and able to answer such a prayer.

A minister of a well-to-do congregation once related in the hearing of the writer an incident which illustrates this. He had a patient on his list who when he called was always described as “too ill to see him.” She steadily grew worse, and one day when walking along the street he met one of her family who informed him that her mother was very ill and “longing to see him.” He hurried to the house at once, and was met at the door by the familiar message that his patient was “very ill, too ill to see him.” On this occasion, however, he begged admittance, and asked permission for an interview with the nurse. On entering the room, the nurse again repeated the old formula—“too ill to see anybody.” “Do you know what Psychotherapy is?” was the surprising answer she received to this remark. She was obliged to admit she had never heard of such a word. “Well,” replied the minister, “it is the influencing of the body through the mind. From all I hear, your patient is just one that is likely to be benefited by such treatment. I hear she wants to see me, and I insist on seeing her *now*.”

With some reluctance, the nurse agreed to his request, and the result was quite remarkable. After a little conversation, the minister engaged in prayer, asking for a definite healing, if it were the Divine will to grant it. During the very progress of this prayer something, to quote the patient’s own words, seemed to “happen.” She felt distinctly better, and begged the minister to return next day. He did so, and from that hour her recovery went on unbroken.

The lesson of such incidents is obvious. "The prayer of faith shall save the sick" is as true to-day as it was in the Apostolic Church. The words of Christ, "These signs shall follow them that believe. They shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover,"<sup>1</sup> were not for an age but for all time.

(4) We now pass to the fourth and last of the medicinal functions of prayer, its influence on the spirit as *the source of power*.

The Evangelical Prophet points to this when he says: "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."<sup>2</sup> It is also promised by Jesus when He says to the disciples, "Tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high."<sup>3</sup> This "tarrying" was understood by them as a tarrying in prayer;<sup>4</sup> and it was in answer to these waiting days that the great Pentecostal blessing came.

Still to-day, the same experience is repeated. Prayer is the pathway to power. No fact is more undoubted, though none is less taken advantage of. The lives of the saints and the mystics all bear testimony to this. If a man will but persist in prayer, no matter how mediocre his talents may be, he must in time become a man of power. The words of Christ are always fulfilled. The power to expel evil is a power that can be won and only won at the altar—"This kind can come out by nothing save by prayer."<sup>5</sup>

This fact is now freely acknowledged even by those who have but little faith in any supernatural agency. Thus Dr. Cutten in an account of the report made by Mr. F. O. Beck on a Questionnaire sent out by him in regard to the efficacy of prayer, says: "Eighty-three per cent. of the respondents thought the results wholly subjective; twelve per cent. thought them both subjective

<sup>1</sup> Mark xvi. 17, 18.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xl. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xxiv. 49.

<sup>4</sup> Acts i. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Mark ix. 29.



and objective, and but five per cent. considered them mostly objective." This was evidently not a credulous selection, and yet he adds: "Seventy per cent. admitted that they felt in the presence of a higher power in the act of prayer," and that by means of it *they acquired* "*an unusual power to accomplish purposes.*"<sup>1</sup>

"Sometimes doubt has been transformed into confident assurance, mental weakness utterly routed by strength, self-distrust changed into self-confidence, fear into courage, dismay into confident and bright hope. These transitions have sometimes come by degrees—in the course let us say of an hour or two; at other times they have been instantaneous, flashing up in brain and heart as if a powerful electric stroke had cleared the air."<sup>2</sup>

What is the explanation of this extraordinary power? In former days it was enough to say, "God answers prayer." Or if this was denied, the whole experience was dismissed as a delusion. In these latter days, under the influence of psychological research, a more reasonable attitude has been taken up. The spiritual value of prayer has not been denied, but it has been explained by the hypothesis of subconscious influence.

We have already referred to this in speaking of the mental peace produced by prayer. The same, it is said, holds still more true in regard to the gift of power which it bestows. Beneath the outward life of man there is, to quote Professor James, "a wider self" in contact with that continuous and indivisible spiritual reality out of which all life comes, and from which alone spring those saving experiences which uphold it and renew it. Prayer brings the soul into contact with this "universal," and thus becomes the channel through which power passes into it. As Mr. Myers says in a letter to a friend: "Prayer is that attitude of open and earnest expectancy to the spiritual universe from which comes the energy which makes the life of each individual spirit. If then we ask, 'To whom

<sup>1</sup> *Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*, p. 408.

<sup>2</sup> Article in the *Outlook*, lxxxiii, quoted by Cutten.



to pray?', the answer strangely enough must be, that that does not much matter. The prayer indeed is not a purely subjective thing. It means a real increase in intensity of spiritual power or grace; but we do not know enough of what takes place in the spiritual world, or how the prayer operates; who is cognizant of it, or through what channel the grace is given."<sup>1</sup>

Such speculations bring us to the verge and over the verge of Pantheism, and will leave the Christian heart "as cold as ice." Christian prayer, if it be anything, is emphatically *not* this. It knows not only *what* it asks but *of Whom* it asks. It is essentially prayer to a Heavenly Father, and not to any universal whole. Its spirit is that of expectant faith, because it is the spirit of a child.

Nevertheless, we have no reason to deny the possibility of subconscious action in prayer. What we have previously said in regard to conversion holds here. It may be that when God speaks directly to the soul He does so through the subconsciousness. There are certain features about answers to prayer, especially those for power, which seem to suggest such action. One is the *mysterious suddenness of the gift*. As the Spirit of power came at Pentecost, so He often comes still. As one has said: "It is the breaking out of unseen fountains. It is the tapping of submerged rivers. This outbreking never comes within consciousness. It is the deep subconscious opening of a divine artesian flow of spiritual energy."<sup>2</sup>

Another feature suggestive of the subconscious is that such answers to prayer are often *independent of the will*. They are plainly no auto-suggestions, but often go in the teeth of inclination. Thus Paul's petition for the removal of "the thorn in the flesh" is answered by a refusal to take it away, but by the injection of a new grace to make him able to bear it and more than able. "Power is made perfect in weakness."<sup>3</sup> As the will acts in

<sup>1</sup> Private letter quoted by James in *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 467.

<sup>2</sup> *Psychology of the Christian Life*, by Dr. H. E. Warner, p. 136.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 9.

harmony with our conscious desires, this would seem to favour the hypothesis that by prayer prolonged and intense, the barrier that separates the conscious from the unconscious life of man is broken down and God gets free play in the soul.

We may add that such a hypothesis is in the fullest harmony with the medicinal theory of prayer. If prayer is a medicine to the soul, it must act in a certain way and by laws of its own, and there is reason to believe that in its influence on the spirit it does so act. It is "the deep calling to the deep";<sup>1</sup> it is "the secret place of the Most High";<sup>2</sup> it is "the shutting the doors"<sup>3</sup> of life, that brings the soul into immediate contact with the divine.

A word may be said in closing as to the best times when such a medicine should be administered. Of course, in one sense, every time of need is the fitting time; but apart from this the community of believers has always set apart special times when prayer should not be pretermitted, no matter what the need may be. The Roman Church has gone to a great length in prescribing such hours of prayer all through the day and night. Without denying the value of thus remembering the Apostolic maxim to "pray without ceasing," the danger of such stereotyped hours and forms is to make prayer a burden and reduce it to mechanism. Prayer should be no nauseous medicine, but a cordial to the soul, delectable to the taste. And yet it must be admitted that it is often not so even in the case of true and sincere Christians. The reluctance to pray and the distraction of the mind at prayer makes it often truly a work, *Orare est laborare*. But if persisted in, it becomes less and less arduous, and at length realizes something of the joy of which Psalmist and Hymnist speak.

For such experiences, there is no doubt the morning hour is by far the best suited. It is when the body is fresh and the spirit is free from care that prayer becomes not merely a medicine but a cordial. "Be ready in the

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xlii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xci. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. vi. 6.

morning," "O God, early will I seek Thee,"—such instances from Scripture teach us that this secret was known to the ancients. Our modern life with its early trains and cars has robbed most men and women of this opportunity. Yet those who have refused thus to be robbed know its value and consider it no ill-spent time.

“There are in this loud stunning tide,  
 Of human care and crime,  
 With whom the melodies abide  
 Of the everlasting chime ;  
 Who carry music in their heart,  
 Through dusky lane, through busy mart ;  
 Plying their daily task with busier feet  
 Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.”



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE HEALING OF THE SANCTUARY

**A**MONG the influences which promote the convalescence of the sin-sick soul and its growth into moral perfection, the value of Common Worship has everywhere been recognized. The patriots of the Old Testament Church have given expression to it in many a Psalm, and when Christ founded the new Temple on the ruins of the old, it soon gathered to itself a passionate devotion that far transcended its predecessor, and has left beautiful expression not merely in history and literature, but in these glorious "poems in stone" in which Christian art has given permanent expression to the devotion it so worthily enshrined.

No doubt the love for "the house of the Lord" is a complex emotion which has many roots, but chief of these has been the experience of its sincere worshippers, that it was good thus to "draw near to God," that a man got an access to the Most High in the "Holy Place" he could seldom get elsewhere, and that by this access his soul was enriched with such blessed experiences as made him say, "A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand."<sup>1</sup>

What these experiences are, it would be too long to tell and unnecessary to recount, since they include almost all the chief emotional experiences that vital religion includes. Chief among them is *relief from spiritual depression*: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? . . . O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them bring me unto Thy

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxxiv. 10.

holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy, and upon the harp will I praise Thee.”<sup>1</sup>

Another is *the cure of doubt*: “When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God.”<sup>2</sup>

A third is *the vision of God*: “So have I looked upon Thee in the sanctuary, to see Thy power and Thy glory.”<sup>3</sup>

Many conversions from Isaiah down to Spurgeon have taken place under the influence of common worship.

What is the secret of these influences? No doubt the Christian will answer, “It is because God is present there.” It is the fulfilment of His promise, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I.”<sup>4</sup> But God’s promises are usually a synonym for man’s receptiveness. He is ready to bless wherever there is an opportunity of doing so, and the extraordinary influences that come from common worship must be therefore due to the observance of certain laws which condition His incoming into the human spirit.

One of these, no doubt, is the influence of sacred Associations; another, especially in the Old Testament Church, is the sense of Patriotism; a third, most potent in the Middle Ages, is the elevating feelings suggested by the fine arts—Music, Architecture and Painting. But these are plainly secondary, not original, causes. In point of fact, some of the most powerful religious impressions have been made in circumstances entirely dissociated from such adventitious aids. The secret, therefore, of the therapeutic value of social worship as distinguished from individual devotion must be sought for somewhere else. Now it is in no sense a disparagement of the words of Christ, “Where two or three are gathered, there am I,” but rather a confirmation of them, when we see in this peculiar influence of common worship a testimony to the spiritual contagion which is always produced by the power

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xlii. 11, xliii. 3, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lxiii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lxxiii. 16, 17.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xviii. 20.

of numbers. Novalis has said that "a truth becomes a hundred times more true to us when we get another man to believe it." And this is the human side at least of the value of common worship—that it brings us into the atmosphere of warmth and sympathy which is always produced even by the "two or three"; and much more by the two or three hundreds—if only they are welded into one sympathetic unity.

*The Psychology of the Crowd*, its virtues and vices, is the subject of an interesting little book by M. Gustave le Bon. The principle he deduces from it is that man is spiritually as well as physically contagious, and that a crowd tends, under skilful handling, to become a spiritual unity, hurrying forward its individual units in one common path. History proves the truth of this. Aside from the French Revolution, which has no doubt largely influenced the author's mind, we have many examples in the past of great spiritual epidemics which spread from country to country, like a plague advancing onward with irresistible infection. Such are the Crusades in the Middle Ages; the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation at the Renaissance, and all the great Revivals which have visited the Church since, especially those of Wesley and Whitfield; the New England Revival under Jonathan Edwards; the Movements of Moody and Sankey, and many another in our own day. War is in itself a spiritual epidemic, and when it seizes a nation few can resist singing its "hymns of hate."

Of course all are not affected by these movements. There are always some, often very many, who are absolutely antipathetic to it. Some of these are temperamentally unemotional. They hate all crowds, and never go into them, saying, with the poet, "Odi profanum vulgus et arceo." Others again are held back by personal or family reasons of their own, so that though they may feel the "pull" of the movement they successfully resist its pressure.

Now it is the advantage of Social Worship that it can,



if skilfully used, participate in this subconscious influence of the crowd. It is here, however, that there is often a vast difference between the worship of one sanctuary and another. In some, there is to begin with no "crowd" at all. There is only a congregation of empty benches. The preacher's task must, in such circumstances, be one of extreme difficulty. In other cases, there may be a crowd, but they are not sympathetically one. They are not homogeneous. They come with varied moods of indifference, preoccupation or prejudice, and thus their presence, in producing that spirit of *Koinonia* or Christian fellowship which is one of the keywords of the New Testament, is rather a hindrance than a help. When, however, we have a crowd, or even a small gathering spiritually prepared and sympathetic, we have at once the conditions of power. The word of the preacher then falls like a spark on a mine already prepared, and a conflagration at once takes place. In a "revival" this is always the case. The speaker has no need to prepare his audience. It is ready, prepared for him.

In the ordinary service of the modern church, however, it is not so, and hence it must always be the task of its leader to get his audience into a general sympathy with himself and his message, and so produce that psychological unity which is essential to great results. This is, as we have hinted, often no easy matter. One of its prerequisites is that the minister must be *himself prepared*. Unless he goes into the service with his own mind prepared, he can prepare no one else. Dr. Maclaren of Manchester, on once being asked what was the secret of his power in the pulpit, replied that he knew no other than this, that he spent the whole of his Sunday morning, not in preparing his sermon, but in preparing himself.

We see the value of such preparation in the very face and mien and voice with which a great preacher begins his service. He rivets the attention from the very first, and arouses the somnolent and the indifferent to an

unaccustomed interest. No doubt much of this is due to the natural genius of the orator, but more must be laid to the spirit of alertness and determination to win his audience to himself and to the great subject he has in hand.

Passing now to the service itself—it consists in an ideal church of three parts—*Prayer, Praise, Exhortation*. It was so from the first days of Christianity, and it will be so to the end. There is, no doubt, a tendency in certain High Church quarters to-day to minimize the sermon and confine common worship to prayer and praise. This is a vast mistake, and is responsible for much of the lack of interest men have to-day in the services of the sanctuary. The listening to a good sermon is as much worship as the following of a prayer or the singing of a hymn, and wherever it is neglected, common worship withers and dies.

With regard to the medicinal value of Common Prayer, little need be added to what has already been expressed in discussing individual devotion. The most interesting point here, perhaps, is the question as to whether such prayer is best expressed in the liturgical or free and extempore methods. Those who are in favour of read prayers point to the difficulty of a congregation being able to “keep up” with the prayer of a minister and adopt it as their own.

Thus Dean Goulburn, laying emphasis on Christ’s words, “If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done,”<sup>1</sup> asks, “How can any congregation agree about their petitions, if these are left to the will of the minister? When he has uttered his petition they may, of course, give their cordial assent to it; but before this mental process which consists of first taking in the petition with the mind and then assimilating it with the will is well finished, the minister has passed on to another petition faster than the worshipper can follow, and the latter soon finds that there

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 19.

is no way of really joining in the service but by listening as he would to a sermon and giving a general assent to the contents of the prayer by the Amen at the close."<sup>1</sup>

There is undeniable truth in this, especially in regard to intercessory prayer. On the other hand, if a liturgical service has its advantages in social assent, and also it must be admitted in beauty of form and sobriety of statement, it labours under the serious disadvantages of fettering the spirit of devotion and falling into that uniformity and monotony which is so often experienced in churches where the liturgy is hurried through as if it were a task to be got quickly done. And it further loses that psychological value to which we have already referred in dealing with the influence of an audience on a speaker. If "the crowd" gives the preacher his sermon, it no less gives the priest his prayer. Personally, we have so often received testimony to the help which free prayer has given through its unconscious adaptation to the need of some individual worshipper, that we would be very slow to give it up. On the other hand, we have as often felt that it was unequal to the occasion, and that it was unlistened to by half the congregation, being either too long, too doctrinal or too extravagant to claim assent.

The question is largely one of temperament, and no fixed rule can be laid down. Personally, we think that a combination of both would be the ideal method. Let one of the prayers be left to the preacher, to voice in it the needs of the people as they press on his own heart. Let the other be one of definite intercessions, to be agreed on by the people and set down in the form of a "common prayer."

Passing now to the second great element of worship, that of Public Praise, we have none of the difficulties to contend with which meet us in the personal and common needs of the individual soul at prayer. Here all may join, and such a union infinitely increases the value of the

<sup>1</sup> *Thoughts on Personal Religion*, p. 136.



Praise thus offered in its reflex influence on the soul. The value of music as a medicine of the soul "in private" is undoubted, and has been felt from the days of King Saul.

"My heart! They loose my heart, those simple words;  
Its darkness passes which naught else could touch,  
Like some dark snake that force may not expel  
Which glideth out to music sweet and low."<sup>1</sup>

But while the value of music in its private uses is thus undoubted, its influence on the great congregation is infinitely greater. Some of the greatest inspirations of history and many of the conversions of the Saints have been due to the influence of well-sung Psalms and Hymns. One of the most notable is the case of Theodore Beza, the French Reformer, who was brought to God by hearing the 91st Psalm sung by the Huguenot congregation at Charenton as he was passing by its open door.<sup>2</sup> Many similar stories are told of the revival songs of America, and the numbers of those who have come to decision during the quiet and solemn singing of Charlotte Elliott's Hymn, "Just as I am," is probably as great as that of any sermon since the Pentecostal outpouring under St. Peter.

That Church Praise should have such results, it must first of all be well rendered and, in the second place, worth rendering.

As to the first, we are not of those who think that Praise cannot have its true healing influences unless it be rendered by the whole congregation. Goethe paints Margaret as being stricken in conscience by simply listening to the Cathedral choir as it chanted in solemn accents the hymn of Judgment:

"Dies Iræ, Dies Illa  
Solvat Sæclum in favilla."

Beza, as we have seen, was converted by listening to

<sup>1</sup> Browning, "Saul."

<sup>2</sup> *The Psalms in History and Biography*, by John Ker, D.D., p. 120.

the people singing a psalm in which he took no part, and we can quite well, therefore, understand how an anthem fittingly rendered by the choir may have the highest devotional effects. But let this be the end in view. Let the purpose of the music be not to enlist admiration, but to further devotion—to inspire, to comfort, to soothe, to awaken.

On the other hand, if the praise is to be rendered by the congregation, as it ought usually to be, it should be such as the entire congregation can join in. Often the music is such that none but the most musical can take part, and often the worshippers are too listless, especially in rich churches, to do so. There is a serious loss in the spiritual output of such services, and the minister should make it his duty to reform it as much as it is in his power to do so. A “well-sung” church is a help both to preacher and worshipper.

The praise should be well rendered, and it should further be worth rendering. Professor Coe, in an article on the psychology of our Christian Hymns, passes some severe strictures on the Revival Hymns of his own land. “There is,” he says, “nothing in them of the profound emotion and stately movement of the standard hymn. The water is shallow and light and shifty, and winds raise ripples everywhere on its surface. Instead of the solemn procession of those who ascend into the hill of the Lord, we have a hop, skip and jump, or a game of tag. The thought is equally weak and disconnected. What is intended for thought is a mere jumble of pious ideas. Metre is held in light esteem, and any crime against sense or syntax is committed for the sake of making rhymes.”<sup>1</sup>

While we by no means join in the indiscriminate abuse of all revival hymns, we must admit that there is much truth in this criticism. Both poetically and otherwise, the taste of the majority of these is deplorably low, and if it be said they are required to make a meeting “go,” then so much the worse for the meeting. To hear people singing,

<sup>1</sup> *The Spiritual Life*, p. 229.

“Jesus is a friend of mine,” in a jaunty way, as if the worshipper were bragging of his high connections, has always given us a shock. In other days Revivals did not need the aid of irreverent words and ragtime melodies, and we do not believe they need it to-day. It is noteworthy that our soldiers on the battlefield prefer, as a rule, the standard hymns and the grand old Psalms for their meetings, and much of the disinclination of the better-class working man to the Revival Meeting is no doubt due to the lack of dignity and reserve in the music that too often surrounds it. In this respect the Psalms give us an example which cannot be too widely followed, and their practical expulsion from many Nonconformist churches is a serious loss to these services.

Passing to the *Hortatory Element* in Christian worship or *the Sermon*, little need be added to what has already been said about the essence of winning the attention of the audience and the binding of it into a psychological unity. Attention may be called the assimilative faculty of the soul. If the words are not listened to, or listened to with little interest and acceptance, they either do not enter the heart at all or do so only to produce spiritual nausea and ejection. To prevent this, the preacher has, therefore, first to win the attention of his hearers and then to commend to their acceptance the truth thus attended to. These two objects differ more than is supposed. A preacher in striving to win attention may cheapen his message by sensational anecdotes or vulgar methods. His problem, therefore, is always a difficult one, to maintain the dignity of the truths he teaches and also to win the interest of those who listen to their proclamation. His task, in a word, must be to translate voluntary into involuntary attention. At the beginning of his sermon the audience will give him their voluntary attention, but, unless he can translate this into the involuntary and compel them to listen by the power of his appeal, the mind will soon wander, and the sermon will only resemble



“medicine” in the nauseous and unpalatable quality of its contents.

As regards the means by which this attention is to be won, this obviously is a subject which goes beyond our sphere. It is one for clinical manuals in the preparation of the preacher. But when all that is said on these questions has been said, the great fact remains, that unless the preacher keep before him the great purpose of his message, that he is there to cure and care for souls, his work will be a failure. We once heard Dr. Denney quote a remark of Vinet regarding preaching, which seemed to us to go to the root of the matter. “In former times,” said this Swiss theologian, “my aim in preparing a sermon was to do justice to the subject. Now my aim is to do justice to the object.” It is because so many preachers think more of the subject than of their object that their preaching is a failure.

But what is the object? Is it the administration of medicine to the sin-sick soul, or is it not also the purveying of spiritual food to the healthy and the strong? We remember Dr. Marcus Dods once saying that Christianity was too much regarded as a “medicine” and too little as a “food.” Christ was the “Bread of Life” as well as the “Balm of Gilead.” No doubt there is truth in this criticism. James Russell Lowell, singing of the religion of the future, says it will be more than

“ . . . an ambulance  
To fetch life’s wounded and malingerers in  
Scorned by the strong.”

“Scorned by the strong”—comments Professor Coe—  
“that is the rebuke which stings, and it stings because of the measure of truth it conveys. It is possible to believe that even Nietzsche may not have been in absolute error when in his burning accusation against Christianity he charges, among other things, that it worships weakness where it should worship strength.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Spiritual Life*, p. 246.

At the same time, we cannot forget that so great a master as Joseph Parker once answered the question, What is the preaching for the age? by replying, "The preaching to broken hearts." "If you knew how many there are in your churches of a morning seeking strength under crushing burdens," said a lady once to me, "you would realize more what a splendid opportunity the preacher has to comfort and to help."

The two ideals cannot be forgotten. The preacher is a good physician to the convalescent, but he is also the spiritual nourisher of the healthy. "Feeding preachers," as they are called, are unusually beloved by their flocks. They may not draw large crowds, but they maintain their popularity with their own. Both aims, we repeat, must be done justice to, and the method of doing them justice is by expository preaching. Faithfully interpreted and applied to the needs of the hour, it will be found to fulfil the old prophecy, "The fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. xlvii. 12.

## CHAPTER IX

### HOLY COMMUNION AS A MEDICINE OF THE SOUL

TO the Christian the Lord's Supper is the highest act of worship. Instituted by the Founder of Christianity in circumstances of great simplicity, it contains to the reflective disciple a surprising amount of truth and indeed focusses the whole light of Christian revelation into one burning spot. Psychologically examined, it is an act of social as well as individual worship. It can only be regularly observed by "two or three." It is strongly expressive of that *Koinonia* which is a prevalent mark of the true church. Yet it is never truly celebrated without an individual fellowship with the living Lord, who is believed by the devout recipient to be present in a special sense. It is a communion with Christ as well as with one another.

The high place of the Eucharist in the services of the Church dates from the earliest times. In the apostolic age it was celebrated every day and was considered as necessary as one's breakfast. In the sub-apostolic Church it is called "the potion of Immortality" by Ignatius, Justin Martyr and Irenæus. At its celebration the Eucharistic prayer acknowledged God as the Giver of life. "Life had acquired a new and deeper meaning. Jesus had already spoken of a life beyond the reach of death to be obtained by the sacrifice of a man's earthly life"; and the Lord's Supper was at once the symbol through which that sacrifice was represented and the medium



through which its spirit was communicated to the believer.<sup>1</sup> It is in harmony with this teaching that the author of the Fourth Gospel puts into the mouth of Christ the mystic words, "He that eateth Me, he also shall live because of Me . . . he that eateth this bread shall live for ever."<sup>2</sup>

The truth expressed by this view of the Lord's Supper is the basal idea of this conception of Christianity, as a system of remedy through union of the soul with God in Christ. And it is because we believe that the Holy Communion is far more than a mere commemorative rite, but is, as Christ says, at its celebration the very communication of God to the believer, that we give it the place we do here as the crowning act of all Christian worship.

Such views, we need not say, are in no way the special possession of High Church or "Catholic" Christianity. On the contrary, they are strongly urged by both Calvin and Luther, and have found a place in all our creeds. Thus an old evangelical divine we have already quoted says, "The Holy Supper is not only meant to put us in mind of the spiritual blessings wherewith we are blessed in Christ, but is also a mean and instrument whereby God doth really exhibit and give forth Christ and His Salvation to true believers, and whereby He doth stir up and strengthen believers to receive and feed upon Christ."<sup>3</sup> He goes on to add that one reason why many neglect it is because they see in it only a remembrance of Christ, and think that as they have Him present in the preaching of the Word, they need no such aid to memory; whereas if they understood that in the Sacrament Christ is really giving Himself up to the soul, they would prize it—at least as much as prayer.

Psychologically, therefore, the Holy Communion is to be regarded as a unique way of appropriating and assimilating Christ Himself. Now this assimilation may, as we have seen, be in two forms, either the assimilation of Christ

<sup>1</sup> Harnack, *Ausbreitung des Christentums*, ch. ii.

<sup>2</sup> John vi. 57, 58.

<sup>3</sup> Marshall, *Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*, ch. xiii.

as the Medicine of the Soul, or the assimilation of Christ as the Bread of Life. Both these functions are seen in the Lord's Supper. The Wine, representing the Blood of Christ shed for sin, may be supposed as pointing more particularly to Christ as the true medicine for sin-sick souls. The Bread, again, as obviously points to Christ as the food of the healthy soul, the staff of his daily life, and the secret of his growth into the perfection of Christian manhood. Both these functions we say are represented distinctly in the Lord's Supper; but both, it must be remembered, may and do coexist in the same experience. The sick patient needs at once the medicine that fights his disease and the food that enables Nature to fight it for him; and so in the Lord's Supper the same recipient may, nay must, receive Christ at one and the same time as Medicine and as Food.

In our previous discussion of the Cross as a remedy of sin, we have already dealt with the death of Christ as a power to begin all that is truly life-giving in the sin-sick soul. Here, therefore, we only dwell on its function as means of spiritual convalescence; on the aid it gives to the soul in fighting its way back to spiritual health, or rather in allowing God to fight it for it.

1. And, first of all, the Lord's Supper acts *as a purgative of sin* by quickening the Conscience afresh. It effects this by arousing in all its partakers—with the exception of the most callous—a sense of reverence and awe that makes them “renew themselves afresh to repentance,” rather than profane such sacred mysteries. It is one of the most remarkable features of the Holy Supper that, however celebrated, it awakens such feelings of reverence as no other act of Christian worship. This is seen in the Romanist, in the genuflexions and strained faces of the devout worshippers, and in the Protestant Highlander in his postponement of Communion to a time far on in life when he may be supposed to be past the errors of youth and confirmed in the faith. In both

these reverences there may be more than a trace of superstition, and yet they are each to be handled with delicacy, inasmuch as they are the evidences of a true and proper feeling.

But, of course, the true use of such a reverence is to make it a motive to self-examination and moral amendment. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat."<sup>1</sup>

Self-examination was always considered by the early Christians as a necessary preparation for worthy Communion. To this day we believe Confession is a necessary discipline to the worthy Communicant of the Catholic Church. And though in the Reformed Church this aid to self-examination was dispensed with owing to the frightful abuses to which it led, yet the duty itself was never set aside. On the contrary, a day was set apart for it as the necessary preparation for Communion. In our busy age this practice has largely fallen into desuetude. Many churches have no preparatory service to Communion, and when they have it is attended by the merest fraction of the members.

This is a grievous loss ; but even though the service be thus not taken advantage of, we believe that the great majority of those who partake do so with a certain private preparation of their own. Coming as it does at stated intervals, Holy Communion is thus a kind of breathing space in the rush of life, enabling the devout participant to take stock of his gains and losses and ask himself the question, "Where am I going? Am I making progress or retrograding?" And he is a wise director of souls who does not fail to point out this use of the Sacrament as a purge of souls and to make it the starting-point for a new beginning. Unconsciousness is the atmosphere of spiritual deterioration, and one of the chief values of the Lord's Supper is that it changes this into the prayer, "Search me, O Lord, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 28.



2. The second medicinal value of the Lord's Supper is its influence as a *spiritual tonic* in times of discouragement.

The doctrine of the Eucharist which creates this, is the faith of the Real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament. Wherever this is believed in the Lord's Supper becomes a most "comfortable" *viaticum*, either in the journey of life or on the last pilgrimage of all. The testimony of our soldiers in France on this point is unmistakable. From multitudes have come the admission that no service has been more helpful to them as they went forward to the battle.

It was the strong opinion of so pronounced an Evangelical as Mr. Hugh Price Hughes, that the Protestant Churches in their antagonism to Roman superstitions had made too little of the truth which lay at the heart of such errors—the truth that in the Sacrament Christ is present in a way unknown elsewhere—not, indeed, in any new way, but in the degree and power in which He is there manifested. As an old Scottish preacher puts it, "We get nae other thing in the Sacrament than thou gets in the Word. What new thing wouldst thou have? But suppose thou gets a better grip of Christ in the Sacrament, is not that better? . . . In the Word thou gets Christ, as it were, between thy finger and thumb, whereas in the Sacrament I get Him in my haill hand, and aye the mair I get hold of Him the mair is my soul enlarged and my faith nourished."<sup>1</sup>

This being so, it is surprising that in the non-Episcopal Churches the practice of Private Communion is so rare. It is now permitted in the Presbyterian Church, but the present writer has never had the experience of any such one expressing a desire for it, although he has occasionally suggested it.

That such a desire is, however, widely felt, especially in time of need, is proved by an incident told the writer about a condemned prisoner who was executed many years ago

<sup>1</sup> *Sermon on the Lord's Supper*, by the Rev. Robert Bruce.

in Glasgow Prison. This man, who was a poacher, had along with an accomplice been surprised by a gamekeeper in the act of poaching. In order to effect their escape they had shot and murdered their assailant, and all attempts to get a reprieve had been unavailing. In their last days both prisoners were very penitent; and as his fellow-culprit, who was a member of the Episcopal Church of Scotland, was to receive Communion on the morning of execution, his fellow-sufferer begged a similar privilege. This my friend, who was a minister of the Presbyterian Church, was not able to do, but he promised to be with him on the last morning and help him by prayer and all that human sympathy could do. But the man evidently desired more, for after his meagre breakfast was finished and while the minister was sitting with him at the breakfast table, he asked the minister to pray, and then quickly took a piece of bread, broke it, and asked the minister to partake with him. He then took up the cup of tea which was lying unfinished before him, and after drinking it handed it to the minister. My friend understood the action, and when the brief Communion was over, bent down his head at the table and invoked the presence of the Saviour whose dying love had been thus commemorated. No Communion could have been more informal, even irregular, and yet my friend declared that he had taken part in none in which the presence of Christ had been more solemnly evident. When it was over the door opened, the minister of justice entered, and the prisoner went forward to his doom with calm and courage.

The incident is a proof that the Communion gives to the worthy recipient something more than prayer or exhortation can do, and that, as the early Church believed, a new fresh gift of "life" was therein bestowed.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. This leads us to the last medicinal value of the

<sup>1</sup> "At the celebration of the Sacrament thanks were offered for the life therein bestowed," *Didache*, ix. 10: Harnack, *Ausbreitung des Christentums*, p. 133.

Lord's Supper; *its influence on character* by the assimilation of Christ as the Bread of Life of which it is at once the symbol and the vehicle. This view of it is rather one which concerns its *nutritive* or *feeding* qualities than its curative and medicinal effects. Nevertheless, as there is no cure of disease so sure as the growth and increase of healthy blood in the body, it falls also to be considered here.

The nutritive value of the Lord's Supper is specially set forth in the element employed to represent it. Bread is the Staff of life, and in partaking of the bread we are, as the Catechism puts it, partaking of His body to our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.<sup>1</sup>

There are two ways in which the Sacrament discharges this function. It does so consciously by the fresh vision of the love of God it always opens to the worthy believer, and by the powerful impulses to adoring gratitude and service which it thus inspires. It is said that Count Zinzendorf was made a missionary by looking at a picture of the Saviour on the Cross, with the legend beneath it: "All this I did for thee, what hast thou done for Me?" The answer which the question elicited from his heart was all his subsequent life. So, the picture of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ exhibited in the Sacrament has been operative in the lives of unnumbered souls as they devoutly participated in it.

This is the Conscious assimilation of the love of Christ mystically pointed to by our Saviour when He says: "My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed."<sup>2</sup> We are not to be supposed as minimizing it, or in any way making it other than, what it must always be regarded, the chief way of assimilating Christ in the Communion, when we add that besides this there is *a secret and unconscious influence* as well, which the Communion makes on the character and life.

This is well described by Martensen. "If further inquiry," he says, "be made of the experiences undergone,

<sup>1</sup> *Shorter Catechism.*

<sup>2</sup> John vi. 55.



as well during the believing partaking of the Holy Supper as after it, we must emphatically insist that the effect of the Sacraments is not limited to the conscious life, but stretches into the unconscious domain of our being, which cannot become the object of psychological experience. An immediate impression may, no doubt, be granted to us in the Supper of the Peace of God in the Communion with our Lord, a sensible renovation in our love to the Lord and His Church, the immediate feeling of a purification that has taken place in us and a new strength for the struggle of life ; but we dare not measure the blessings of the Supper by our own changing moods. By partaking of the Sacrament there is always a seed planted in us which will imperceptibly germinate and bear fruit, in so far as that growth is not checked by sin or unbelief.”<sup>1</sup>

Of the truth of this we have frequent instances in the lives of the Mystics. Thus of St. Catherine of Siena her biographer writes, that she used to Communicate with such fervour that she would pass into a state of ecstasy in which for hours she would be quite unconscious ; and it was then she had some of her greatest visions, which led to a life of such practical and powerful influence not only in her town, but in the life of the Church.<sup>2</sup>

We need not, however, postulate the need for visions and ecstasies to believe that unconscious to the recipient Christ may in the Holy Communion come into the soul with a life and power not fully known at the time. We do not always know the good that our food is doing us. Often we have to force ourselves to eat, and experience little pleasure after we have partaken of it. Yet we feel afterwards that what was eaten with almost nausea, has been the means of our recovery. So, as Martensen says, we are not to interrogate our moods and feelings for the value of Communion, but to obey the injunction, “ Arise and Eat,” and we may like the prophet find that we can go in the strength of that meat “ forty days.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Martensen, *Individual Ethics*, p. 194, Eng. tr.

<sup>2</sup> Gardner, *Life of Catherine of Siena*, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings xix. 8.

The Lord's Supper being so valuable to the spiritual life both as food and medicine, it may be asked—Why in the Evangelical Church is this ordinance so little regarded? Why is it so seldom observed? Why is it so often added to the end of a service as a mere optional adjunct to be partaken in only by the merest fraction of the congregation?

These are questions to which some answer should be given, and it must be one that does not minimize the value of it, if it is to be true to the Spirit of its Founder. But it must be frankly admitted that there are two sides to this question, and that those who advocate an infrequent Communion do so with no disrespect to its importance, but rather because of their reverence for its high and holy character.

Those who advocate infrequency of Communion point to its impressiveness when so observed and to its value as a great event in the Christian life. They hold that "the preaching of the Word" can do all that is needed from Sunday to Sunday, and that the Sacrament gains its true place when it is thus made "a high day." They further point to the undoubted fact that when it is made a weekly observance, as in Catholic or Anglican Churches, few communicate save at the great Church Festivals, and that a Communion thus neglected is worse than none.

The Catholic Churchman again urges that frequent Communion was the practice in the early Church, that if Christ as the Bread of Life is communicated there, He cannot be partaken of too often, and there are always souls in a large congregation in special need of the comfort of the Supper for which an opportunity should be afforded.

The Controversy is not new. It was debated between the Jesuits and Jansenists. The Jesuits favoured frequent Communion, with Confession. This was, curious to say, welcomed by the gay *frivolées* of Paris, inasmuch as it gave them an opportunity to absolve their



consciences of their sins during the week, and to gain the favour of the Most High on Sunday.

Arnauld, again, on behalf of the Jansenists, took the Puritan side, and in a weighty treatise entitled *De la frequente Communion* urges the solemn responsibility of all who would partake in such an ordinance.

At the present day it must be said that fashion inclines to a more frequent Communion both in the Protestant and Catholic Churches. Dean Goulburn, who favours the High Church frequency, quotes an interesting paragraph from Adolph Monod, the French Protestant. This great Evangelist had daily Communion at his death-bed during the last three months. The rite was so helpful to him that he made it the subject of one of those unique Communion addresses then delivered and published after his death under the title, *Regrets of a Dying Man*. In it he says: "I wish you to know that in the frequent reception of the Communion during my illness, I find much comfort and I hope much fruit. It is a great evil that the Communion should be celebrated so rarely in our Church—an evil people on all sides are now applying themselves to remedy. Our Reformers, in establishing this order of things, have taken care to explain that they did it only for a time, to prevent certain grave abuses which had crept into the Church. But what they did as a temporary precaution has remained in the greater number of our churches for ages. At length we reach the time when we may expect to have frequent Communion restored. Calvin says that the Communion ought to be celebrated at least every Sunday. Remark this 'at least.' If it should be every Sunday at least, what should it be at most? 'At most' must be to take it, as the early Christians did, every day, 'from house to house' at the close of the family repast.

"Each of you may have remarked that rare communicating gives I know not what strange and extraordinary ideas of Communion—of the preparations which ought to precede and the emotions which ought to follow it.



“On the contrary, frequent communicating makes us understand much better the true character of this Sacrament, and it is impossible that daily communicating should fail to put us in possession of that character; for it teaches us to connect the Communion with all that is most simple in daily life—as a repast is one of the simplest things in ordinary life. Whether, however, there should be daily celebration or not, certainly in seeing in our Communion the simplest act of our faith, we shall profit by it most, and it is in this way that it will nourish our souls most effectually, with the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

It will be observed Monod favours daily celebration. For one on a dying bed such a receptiveness was quite natural. But would any one say that the best results of this ordinance would be gained if it were made the conclusion of our daily repast? The early Church is no model here. It was in a quite extraordinary state of revival and daily expectancy of the Second Advent. As soon, however, as this began to pass away we see the abuses of irreverence creeping in, as it did to a terrible extent in the Corinthian Church.

The lesson we learn is that, on the whole, a less frequent Communion makes the service of that high and solemn character which gives it its best results on the mind of the recipient; but that, as in every church there are those who are temperamentally more receptive of the spiritual aids of such services, or who need them because of special circumstances, an opportunity should always be given once a month to come forward to the Supper. In our larger centres we would go further and select one central church in which every Lord's Day morning this great central rite of the Faith should be observed, so that all who desired might come forward to its celebration.

<sup>1</sup> Goulburn, *Personal Religion*, p. 131.

## CHAPTER X

### SPIRITUAL SURGERY

THERE are certain diseases of the body which are not amenable to medical treatment. The malady is either too far gone or is of such a malignant character that its extirpation by the knife is the only remedy. The same is true of the soul. There are times, says Jesus in a famous passage, where none but surgical treatment will avail. "If thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should go into hell."<sup>1</sup>

"If"—the conjunction is noteworthy. Christ does not prescribe this as the ideal method of dealing with sin. Surgery may be the favourite child of physical medicine to-day, but it is not of Spiritual—according to the Divine Physician. Jesus was no ascetic, who liked cutting for cutting's sake. His ideal for man is a complete sanctification in which no member is wanting. "The God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God that your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,"<sup>2</sup> would have been His prayer as well as that of His great Apostle. But He recognized that there were cases where a spiritual amputation was necessary as the condition of recovery, and accordingly He comes before us in this chapter

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 29, 30.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. v. 23.

not as the Divine Physician but as the Spiritual Surgeon.

What are those forms of soul malady in which a spiritual amputation of the offending part is indicated as the only hopeful method of treatment? They may be divided into three classes—*Chronic Sins*, *Mortal Sins* and *Sins of Compromise*.

1. There are some sins which through long persistence have become hopelessly chronic. The patient lives in a condition of continual repenting of them and as constant relapse into them. There is no moral progress in such a life, and the soul is either so fatally weakened that it is in danger of dying altogether or it is so hopelessly and progressively enfeebled as to be incapable of achieving any spiritual result in the world. Its condition is that of a moral invalid.

Such a condition is often reached in those diseases of the Flesh which we have described in a previous chapter. In alcoholic intemperance, for example, we have a familiar instance of it. The subject of this affection may be in entire revolt against the degrading habit which has led him into slavery. He may react against it time after time, in the resolution to be done with an indulgence that brings him into such depths of self-contempt and entails such miseries on those around him. But although the resolution may seem for a time to win a successful result, the reformation is only temporary. The old desire returns in an unguarded hour with victorious power, and the last state is worse than the first.

Is there any cure for such a melancholy chronicity of sin? Christ says there is. But the cure must be a drastic one. There must be an excision of that part in the man's life which is the source or nidus of the disease. In other words, there must be a renunciation not merely of the sin itself but of those things which are associated with it, which give rise to it, and from which its desire from time to time springs forth.



Such a spiritual surgery is by no means a pleasant process. It often means the sacrifice of something that is very dear—a cherished friendship, a prized possession, a beloved accomplishment, even sometimes our very means of subsistence. In other words, to use Christ's strong language, "Houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands,"<sup>1</sup> have to be sacrificed for eternal life.

In the incident of the Highland fiddler, told in a previous chapter, who trampled his beloved violin to fragments because he recognized in it "the foe in his own household," we have an illustration of the necessity and the value of such renunciation. And the same is true with many another case of alcoholic excess or sensual appetite. Before resolution can touch reality, it must become effective by renunciation. The knife must be used if the soul is to be set free.

2. Another case where spiritual amputation may be needed is that of the so-called *Mortal Sins*. The Reformed Church has never acquiesced in the distinction between Mortal and Venial sins. It has felt that there is a danger in such a drawing of the line, inasmuch as the most venial sin may become mortal if it is a sin against the light, and that if a man offend in one point, he is, in a sense, guilty of all. Nevertheless, it may be admitted that practically there is such a distinction. "Some sins, by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others."<sup>2</sup> From the medical point of view, mortal sins may be described as malignant growths: they are spiritual maladies which have the power of rapid and deadly development. They infiltrate all the spiritual issues of the soul, drying it up by invading its vital centres.

Such a malignant growth, for example, is "the pride of great possessions"; and it was because of its presence in the otherwise lovable "young ruler," who came to

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xix. 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Question 83.

Jesus seeking the secret of eternal life, that our Lord advised him to use the sharp knife of a complete renunciation—"If thou wouldst be perfect, go sell that thou hast and give to the poor . . . and come, follow Me."<sup>1</sup>

The word "perfect" here has been interpreted to mean that state of spiritual perfection which is attained only by "the saints" of the Catholic Church—a kind of spiritual aristocracy of the race. It is probable, however, that Christ uses the word as He does elsewhere, in the sense of that perfectness of intention, that sincerity of soul which He demands of all who follow Him. In a word, "perfect" means to Him morally healthy; and the reason why He points out this high path of self-renunciation as the only way by which this young man could reach this spiritual health, is that He sees in him a mortal growth of pride,—likely, unless he took the most drastic measures with it, to destroy his whole spiritual life. Hence the words of Jesus when this young man, unable to submit himself to this amputation, went away sorrowful—"How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" Christ pities men of great wealth, because their outward conditions are so unhealthy spiritually. He does not, however, take up any Essene antagonism to property as such. He said nothing about such renunciations to His other disciples, because to them they were unneeded. He does not call for sacrifice for sacrifice's sake. He points the path of renunciation to this young man because it is the only path of life open to him, because the right hand has to be sacrificed that the body may live.

We have an illustrious example of the wisdom as well as the joy of such a treatment in the case of St. Francis of Assisi, who "suffered the loss of all things, and counted them but dung that he might win Christ." Francis' great obstacle to a holy life, as we learn from his biographer, was pride—the love of being in the best society of the place and regarded by his neighbours as one of the aristocracy, though only a merchant's son. This he

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xix. 21.

derived from his father, a purse-proud worldling, who grudged no money for his son's dissipations provided he was "in the best set." This vanity was fostered by Francis' own temperament, an ardent and romantic one, to which the glamour of the Age of the Troubadours made a powerful appeal. But there was as well a deeply religious root in his life, and for a time he tried to satisfy both these aspirations. It was only after many a failure that he came to see that for him, at least, the only way to eternal life lay through a renunciation of the most drastic kind; not merely his wealth, but his home and everything the world called dear.

Having made the decision to use the knife, he made, as all the world knows, a clean cut. He did not scruple to sell his very "garments" that he might buy his sword.<sup>1</sup> On one occasion his now furious father made a petition at the Courts for his expulsion from Assisi, as a disobedient spendthrift who had robbed his father. "What have I taken from you?" said Francis. "I have resigned all that I ever had from you." "Why," said the furious man, "the very clothes on your back are mine." For answer, he retired from the court and came back in a few minutes naked. Then, "holding in his hand the packet into which he had rolled his clothes, he laid these down before the Bishop with the little money which he still kept, saying: 'Listen, all of you, and understand it well. Until this time I have called Pietro Bernardone my father; but now I desire to serve God alone. This is why I return to him this money, for which he has given himself so much trouble, as well as my clothing and all I have had from him; for from henceforth I desire to say nothing else than 'Our Father who art in Heaven.'"<sup>2</sup>

It was not Francis' intention at first to be a monk. Sabbatier, indeed, regards this as a degradation of the true Franciscan ideal. His purpose was to become a little brother of the poor, as Jesus had been the "Great Brother," and this he certainly achieved by his great

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxii. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Sabbatier, *Life of St. Francis*, Eng. trans., p. 61.



renunciation. His pride and sensuality then received their death-blow, and though they made some feeble efforts afterwards to regain their power, these were but the dying agonies of a mortally wounded monster.

St. Francis was not the first, neither has he been the last, to fall in love with Poverty and find in her a winsome bride. In every age—in Monasticism in the first, and in the Salvation Army in the last—men have espoused the poor man's lot for the sake of Christ. It is true they have not always done so under the same motives. Sometimes they have done so simply for the sake of love to Him and the desire to serve Him. So must we interpret the sacrifices of such men as St. Francis Xavier, the Catholic missionary; so the devotion of Francis Crossley of Manchester, who left all that he might save the poor and the lost in his great city. But whatever be the motive of their renunciation, this must always be one result of it, that it destroys the seat of all those sins which rise from the possession of great wealth, and brings the renunciant into closer fellowship with Him "who was rich, yet for our sakes became poor."

3. This brings us to consider the third class of sins in which the surgeon's knife is the best remedy—*the Sins of Compromise*.

Sins of compromise are of two classes. They are either compromises between a man's business and his Christian profession, or they are compromises between his earthly calling and his Divine call. The first class has to do with things that are in themselves sinful, such as commercial dishonesty, falsehood in speech and act, "bowing in the House of Rimmon." The second concerns things that may in themselves be perfectly innocent, but which stand between the man and some high ideal of service which his conscience has set up before him. We have a good example of the first class in the sacrifice Mr. Charrington made of his shares in the great brewery firm which bears his name, because he thought it a wrong

thing to make his money out of a business which was ruining the lives of so many around him. Of the second, the sacrifice of Frank Crossley, to which we have already referred, is a good example. There was nothing wrong in making gas-engines and in living in comfort and luxury on wealth so made; but Crossley felt that such a life was inimical to his heavenly calling. He could not live in comfort himself while thousands were starving around him. He could not preach salvation from a villa in Bordesley to men and women surrounded by daily temptations in the slums of Ancoats. And so he left all, and made, like his great namesake, the great renunciation; only from a different and perhaps even higher motive—to bring the gospel near to his fellow-men.

When a man refuses to listen to these calls of his conscience, his life becomes a life of compromise. This is the case with thousands in the Christian Church to-day. They cannot be called unbelievers or hypocrites. On the contrary, they are earnest followers after eternal life; but they cannot give up their business or subsistence, and accordingly their Christian life is one of daily compromise—a perpetual bowing in the House of Rimmon, followed by the perpetual prayer, “The Lord pardon Thy servant in this thing.”<sup>1</sup>

That such a prayer may be answered may be possible. The Lord is pitiful. “He knoweth our frame: He remembereth that we are dust.” But that it can be answered in any large sense is impossible. It is beyond the power of God Himself to bring a noble result out of a life of perpetual compromise; for its condition is that of a man who has a running sore. He may continue to live, but it must be at a low level. His service of God must be feeble, his grasp on Christian verities insecure, and he will not seldom succumb to an attack of unbelief in the whole structure of his faith. Hence the treatment of Christ to such patients is one of drastic renunciation. “If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings v. 18.

thee. It were better that one of thy members should perish than that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

Such are the general conditions that call for surgical treatment in the spiritual sphere. Turning now to the operation itself, the first thing to be noted in making it a successful one is the importance of a strong initiative. Professor Bain has some good remarks on Salvation by Surgery. "In cutting off any habit," he says, "*launch yourself into the new life with as strong and decided an initiative as possible.*"<sup>1</sup> It is here that a deep religious experience has an enormous advantage. It is extremely difficult to pump up by any mere will-power the feelings necessary to give such an initiative. It is to be noted that Professor Bain does not take an optimistic view of a permanent change in habits of long standing. "The explanation," he continues, "of sudden conversions is to be sought in some overpowering impression on the mind. If we can only strike a blow with such power as to seize possession of a man's entire thoughts and voluntary dispositions for a certain length of time, we may succeed in launching him in a new career and in keeping him in that course until there be time for habits to commence, and until a force is arrayed in favour of the present state of things able to cope with the tendencies and growth of the former life. Such changes occasionally occur, but not without terrific struggles, which prove how hard it is to set up the volitions of a day against the bent of years."<sup>2</sup>

There is a certain amount of truth in this; but the Professor underrates the power of religious motive powers. The case of Colonel Gardiner and many others proves that when such are invoked the knife of renunciation can make a clean cut between past and present; so that the astonished subject of such an experience is constrained to say: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things are passed away: behold, they are made new." "The expulsive power of a new affection" becomes a

<sup>1</sup> *The Emotions and the Will*, p. 443.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 453, 454.



spiritual anæsthetic which deadens the pain; if not as the knife goes through, certainly during the first weeks and months when the cutting off of an old habit would be a gnawing agony otherwise impossible to be borne.

The second advice given by Bain for a successful amputation of a noxious habit is, "*Do not suffer a single exception to occur till the new habit is securely rooted in your life.*"<sup>1</sup>

This, too, is a valuable suggestion. One relapse not only means the loss of the ground already gained, but involves a return to the initial starting-point, with the additional incubus of discouragement incurred by the first breakdown. Hence the importance of utterly destroying the nest of association in which the old appetite had its birth. The Salvation Army, as Professor Starbuck remarks, has been exceedingly wise in its treatment of young converts in this respect. It sets them to work immediately, and, by a round of duty and excitement, feeds the emotional centres in such a way that the sense of lassitude, of emptiness, of "aching void," which so often follows a great renunciation, has no time to make itself felt. The convert is launched on a spiritual wave of enthusiasm, and prevented from falling back under the influence of old friends or tainted associations.

Where such a complete change is not possible, the subject of self-renunciation should make some such break with the past, as the Highland Fiddler, already referred to, did when he destroyed his fiddle. We must not only shoot the rooks, but pull down the rookery, if we would prevent the old tenants returning. That a relapse is always fatal, we would not, however, say. As we have already pointed out, there are cases where a second, or even third, fall has been followed by a complete severance with the past. But, on the whole, a return even once to the old sin is one of the most sinister symptoms in the recrudescence of an old habit. It is like a cancer which

<sup>1</sup> *The Emotions and the Will*, p. 445.

returns after an operation—to be regarded as the death-warrant of the soul. The spiritual surgeon should therefore be on his guard, in cutting off any noxious growth, to cut off its spiritual adhesions as well. Let the knife be freely used. It will be the kindest friend in the long run.

To these suggestions of Professor Bain, William James adds a third, "*Seize the first opportunity to act on the resolution you have made.*"<sup>1</sup>

Surgeons know the value of expedition in regard to certain operations. An hour often decides the question of life and death. The same is true of the spiritual crisis of the soul. "The native hue of resolution" is apt to be "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," and, therefore, in a moment of enthusiasm the soul should at once commit itself to the line of conduct which it sees to be its only safe one. It was doubtless because of this that Jesus said to the man who wished to bury his father, "Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." He felt there was no time to lose. The iron was hot. The blow must be struck, else the resolution would "lose the name of action." It would fade away in mere emotion and leave its possessor unchanged in heart and life.

In a fine sonnet Wordsworth tells of a cloud-effect he once witnessed on the Yorkshire hills. The sun sank behind great cloud-masses, assuming the form of towers and minarets belonging to some heavenly city. It was a beautiful sight, but he ends sadly :

". . . they are of the sky  
And from the earthly memory fade away."

So is it, says the prophet, with the man of mere emotion. His goodness is "as the morning cloud and as the dew that goeth early away."<sup>2</sup> It is the religion of mere sentimentalism.

Now, the way to prevent such a degeneracy of resolu-

<sup>1</sup> Professor James, *Psychology*, vol. i. p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> Hos. vi. 4.

tion is to seize the first moment to translate it into action. A truth, as Coleridge says, becomes twice true when translated into action, and it is when we act on our resolutions without delay that they become spiritually saving. If the knife must be used, the sooner the better.

Such are some of the suggestions which our best psychologists have given for making an operation in Spiritual Surgery successful. Let us close by the remark that while we do not favour any ascetic ideal, we are convinced that there is no life in which such operations may not have to be used in some small measure. While the major operations should only be had recourse to under those grave conditions of spiritual disease to which we have referred, it is yet true that in every life there will occur times when the knife of self-denial is needed.

Professor James points out that in the present age there is a decided reaction against the old ascetic ideals of the past. "We no longer think that we are called on to face physical pain with equanimity. . . . Even in the Mother Church herself, where ascetic discipline has such a fixed traditional prestige as a factor of merit, it has largely come into desuetude, if not into discredit. A believer who flagellates or macerates himself to-day arouses more wonder and fear than emulation. Many Catholic writers, who admit that the times have changed, do so resignedly, and even add that perhaps it is as well not to waste feeling in regretting the matter; for to return to the heroic corporal discipline of ancient days might be an extravagance."<sup>1</sup>

The fact is, however, that we do not need to manufacture such methods of self-discipline to-day. We meet with them in our day's work. Life is so hard and strenuous for the true worker that he does not need to seek for his salvation in hair shirts or flagellants. He finds it in

<sup>1</sup> *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 298.



giving himself in service for his fellow-men. This is the true self-discipline, and it is in following it out that the soul gains that spiritual health which can only be won by the path of self-denial. For the words of Christ are as true to this age as they were to any other: "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvi. 24.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE DIVINE SURGERY OF PAIN

IN the previous chapter we were dealing with those renunciations which are self-imposed—those cases of Spiritual Surgery where, to preserve the life of the whole body, the will freely sacrifices a part. There are, however, as large a number of cases where the sacrifices are beyond our control. God seems to take the knife into His own hand and cut away the offending member without the consent, even against the consent, of the will. Sometimes this amputation is of something so dear that to take it away seems to take away our very life. Nevertheless, in the end it is found not so. In the interpreting light of time loss proves eternal gain, and the sufferer is enabled to say: “He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”<sup>1</sup>

It is this second form of Spiritual Surgery we have now to deal with—the most mysterious of all Christian experiences, *the Divine Surgery of Pain*. Our Lord Himself refers to it, using a similar figure, though in reference to the vegetable rather than to the animal organism, when He says: “Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh it away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit.”<sup>2</sup> The distinction, indeed, between what may be called the Auto-Surgery of Self-renunciation and the Divine Surgery of Pain is not absolute. The Will must consent in the latter case to the extent, at least, of Resignation, if the operation is to have a beneficial effect. The Soul

<sup>1</sup> Job xxiii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> John xv. 2.

must be able to say, "Thy Will be done," before God's Will can be done. There is no spiritual benefit that can be gained without the consent of the will. We may be compelled, like Simon the Cyrenian, to bear the Cross at the first, but if the Cross is to be of value to us we must take it up at the last. Yet there is a distinction in the method of cure, due doubtless to the condition of the patient or the nature of his disease. There are some who cannot take the knife into their own hands. They are, so to speak, "babes in Christ." To save them the Divine Surgeon must take the knife Himself; but in doing so, and in helping us to reach that spirit of resignation without which the operation cannot have its most salutary effect, He reminds us that in this we are only followers of Himself. The Divine Surgeon learnt His skill in a school of personal experience. He Himself had to bear the wounds of the knife in order that He might reach His "perfection,"<sup>1</sup> and as He takes the same sharp instrument into His hands in order to prune away the dead branches in our spiritual life, He points to these wounds, that the "consideration"<sup>2</sup> of them may become the anodyne of our pain and the minister of resignation to us.

"Thy wounds are five: two in Thy feet,  
Two in Thy hands and one within  
Thy side, that pierced Thy heart divine.  
Yet what are Thy five wounds to mine?  
The innumerable wounds of sin,  
Wherewith my death is nigh complete!

Behold my wounds transcending even  
Thine own! And heavenly Surgeon haste.  
Heal what is not past healing: yea,  
And with Thy kind knife cut away  
Mortified parts that burn and waste.  
Thy probe, Thy lancet, are of Heaven."<sup>3</sup>

In Physical Surgery there are three kinds of operations: those which are *Excissory*, those which are *Preventive*, those which are *Ancillary*. The Excissory ones are those connected with noxious growths. When a malignant

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. iii. 1,

<sup>3</sup> Catherine Tynan Hinkson.



tumour fastens on any part of the organism, it has to be cut away as soon as possible in order that life may be preserved.

The *Preventive* operations are less numerous, but they are a real and growing province of surgical practice. They are those which the Surgeon employs on those patients who have a tendency to certain diseases of a serious nature. To prevent these diseases materializing, he removes the region or organ they are likely to attack, and thus prevents their appearance. The removal of the Tonsils or the Vermiform Appendix are familiar examples of Preventive Surgery; but there are many others.

The *Ancillary* operations are the largest class of all. They are those which are necessary to promote the use of the members of the body; especially the great functions of Locomotion and Reproduction. They are often rendered necessary by injuries to the Limbs or the Organs of Reproduction, and are the most valuable and hopeful of all forms of Surgery.

In a similar way, we may say, there are four great classes of Spiritual Surgery which generally follow after the principle of the Physical, except that the Divine Surgery is fourfold,—*Retributive, Purgative, Preventive, or Vicarious.*

1. There are a number of Trials which must be regarded as *Retributive* or *Punitive* in their character. They are expressive of God's displeasure with sin, and His desire to extirpate it from the Soul He loves. His action in doing so is, of course, in the highest degree a loving one. He comes as the good Surgeon to excise the cancerous tumour that would otherwise destroy a life. Nevertheless, His first attitude is one of anger, displeasure at its presence, marring His fair creation; and a determination at all costs to cut it away from what He loves.

This punitive action of God in pain is spoken of in the Scriptures under the name of "chastisements"; but the

human practitioner needs to be cautious in the interpretation of such trials as come under his treatment, as Divine chastisements. We have an example of the danger of this in the case of Job.

In Job the Mystery of Pain is dealt with in unparalleled sublimity, from the Old Testament point of view. All pain is necessarily punitive or retributive in character. Job's comforters are not to be so utterly condemned, as they are sometimes represented, as men of no feeling or spiritual tact. On the contrary, when they first came to him they were full of sympathy with his sad lot. They sat silent with him seven days, "and none spoke a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great."<sup>1</sup> When at last, in answer to his bitter cry, they do open their mouths, their words are full of courtesy and consideration. This is the tone of Eliphaz's first speech. But when Job begins to fight with the tragic riddle of his fate, and to hint that God has treated him unfairly, then, in compliance with their creed, that all suffering is retributive, they are obliged to hold that Job is a greater sinner than he appears to be; until the wrath of the miserable Patriarch is justly aroused at such a "miserable comforting," and he turns to God as his final "Vindicator," who if not "in his flesh," and, at least, "out of his flesh," will one day establish his innocence before men. It is quite clear from the poem that the author takes the side of Job in this great controversy, and may so far be regarded as one of "the Sceptics of the Old Testament."<sup>2</sup> To him suffering is no proof of sin, and the "haste" with which Zophar attempts to prove Job a sinner has something almost indecent about it. It merits the condemnation expressed by a recent critic: "The Psalmist said in his haste, 'All men are liars.'" Zophar said in his haste an unkindlier thing, that all sufferers are sinners. The great discoverers in nature and grace alike have brooded long before they dogmatized. Had Zophar taken time to observe and reflect, he would have said, "Some sufferers

<sup>1</sup> Job ii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Dillon includes Job in the Sceptics of the Old Testament.



are saints." Had he taken still more time he might have added: "And some are Saviours."<sup>1</sup>

But while the wise soul-healer must be slow indeed to interpret the trials of those he attends as due to their sin, what a man cannot say to his friend he may profitably say to himself. And, in point of fact, in saying it he may ease the intolerable mystery of it. What anguished Job was, that he could not see God in his experience at all. It seemed so unmerited. But when a man is able to put his finger on the place and say, "Thou ailest here, and here," a sense of peace comes to him even in his sufferings. He realizes the justice of God in sending him an experience which, though sharp as a knife, may be as beneficent. Although, therefore, there is truth in Bacon's famous saying that while "prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament, adversity is the benediction of the New," we have also cause to remember that such adversity can only be benedictory when we recognize it first to be punitive, sent to purge out of our life those elements which without its action would weaken or destroy it altogether. And here we come on the capital error of Christian Science. The great heresy in that so-called Christian message is not that it is a Superstition or a Knavery professing to do what it cannot do. Its most serious dissidence from Christian truth is that *it denies the ministry of pain*. It shuts its eyes to the Cross. As Coulson Kernahan<sup>2</sup> well says, instead of the Man of Sorrows, it bids us worship a Man of No Sorrows. That such a travesty of Christianity should be accepted by many to-day, is not perhaps wonderful; but that it should be accepted by those who call themselves Christians, is remarkable indeed. In its denial of the reality of pain, it eviscerates the Gospel of its central symbol—the Cross.

It was one of the secrets of strength in the Puritan conception of God that it recognized that no trial could in the highest degree be purgative that was not first

<sup>1</sup> Professor Jas. Strahan, *Commentary on Book of Job*, ch. xx. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *The Man of No Sorrows*, by Coulson Kernahan.



realized to be punitive; that no refining influence could come from sorrow, without the sufferer feeling and believing that there was in his character some dross to be refined away. This is the thought Hawthorne puts so finely into the dying lips of the Puritan minister when, in answer to Hester's suggestion that they had "ransomed" each other "with all this woe," he replies:

"Hush, Hester, hush! The law we broke! The sin here so awfully revealed—let these alone be in thy thoughts! It may be that when we forgot our God, when we violated our reverence each for the other's soul, it was thenceforth vain to hope that we could meet hereafter in an everlasting and pure reunion. God knows, and He is merciful! He hath proved His mercy, most of all, in my afflictions. By giving me this burning torture to bear upon my breast! By sending yonder dark and terrible old man to keep the torture always at red heat! By bringing me to die this death of triumphant ignominy before the people! Had either of these agonies been wanting, I had been lost for ever. Praised be His name! His will be done! Farewell!"<sup>1</sup>

2. But while all retributive trials are purgative, at least in this life, all purgative trials are not retributive. There is a class of painful experiences which have no retributive element in their purpose. On the contrary, they may be a recognition that the sufferer has in him some peculiar merit which can be called forth in the furnace of some bitter experience.

It was the failure to recognize this that was the error of Job's comforters, and in former times, and under a sterner creed the same mistake was often made. We see it exemplified in the attitude of the "barbarians" of Melita towards the shipwrecked Paul.<sup>2</sup> Our Lord rebukes it once and again in His disciples, especially when He declares of the blind man that neither did he sin nor his

<sup>1</sup> *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne, ch. xxiii.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xxviii. 4.

parents, "but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."<sup>1</sup>

In our softer age we rarely see such rude mistakes made in judging the trials of others as were made by Job's friends. Yet the attitude of many to the problems suggested by the War, and the demand for "victories" as a proof that God exists at all, show how far men still are from the Divine Mind in the interpretation of the mystery of pain. From the language of many it would seem as if Calvary had never taken place at all, and that victory, immediate and absolute, was the true test of truth. That truth must in the end prevail is based on the fact that untruth is disease and contains within it the principle of death. But that it must immediately prevail is no way taught either in Scripture or by Science. On the contrary, so long as there is evil in the world, there must be a certain amount of pain and temporary loss. Only when this is purged by suffering can the health either of the individual, or the nation, or the world be established.

Now, in the case of the individual, suffering may come to him not on account of his own sin but that, as Christ said, "the works of God should be made manifest through him."<sup>1</sup> He becomes the instrument through which God has to perfect His work. In so far as that purifying work has to be done by fire because of the alloy of evil that has to be refined away, it may be true in a certain sense that such trials are due to sin. If there were no sin, there would be no suffering; but they are not due to any peculiar demerit on the part of the sufferer. Rather, as we have said, the reverse. They are due to the fact that in them is the promise of a richness of character and a perfectness of fruit which make such a refining process at once hopeful and desirable. "Every branch that beareth fruit, He cleanseth it that it may bear more fruit."<sup>2</sup>

"Mark of rank in nature is capacity for pain,  
And the anguish of the singer makes the sweetness of the strain."

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<sup>1</sup> John ix. 3.

<sup>2</sup> John xv. 2.

The value of such reflections is, however, more open to the sufferer himself than to the Spiritual Healer, who would try to interpret to him the mystery of pain. He only knows how far an experience is retributive or purely purgative. Often what seems undeserved suffering is felt by the sufferer himself to be no more than "the just reward of his deeds."<sup>1</sup> But when the mystery of pain does seem deep—when, like Job, we can say without any undue self-righteousness that we have not deserved this load of woe, so crushing and protracted, there is always a "way to escape" provided by a thought like this. God can only forge His most perfect instruments in the furnace of suffering. It has been so with all the greatest souls and thinkers of history, and it must be so in a lesser sense with all who would be baptized into fellowship with Christ.

"Who never ate his bread in sorrow,  
Who never spent the midnight hours  
Weeping and wailing for the morrow,  
He knows not you, ye eternal powers!"<sup>2</sup>

3. We now pass to the third class of the disciplinary experiences of life—those which are *Preventive* in their purpose.

These experiences are represented by those losses and bereavements which are sent by God to arrest the progress or prevent the advent of some hitherto unforeseen evil. It is, of course, impossible for the subject of them to understand the full meaning of all such trials. To do so would imply the possession of omniscience. Only when we know as we are known shall we understand the reason of these "withholdings" of the Divine Providence, the meaning of these "Bithynias" into which the Spirit suffers us not to enter.

There are, however, times when this veil is somewhat removed and we are permitted to understand the Rationale of the Divine Working. Thus when Jeroboam's wife repaired to the prophet Ahijah to entreat him for the

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiii. 41.

<sup>2</sup> *Goethe*, Carlyle's translation.



recovery of her sick child, she was met at the door of his house with the tidings that her dear one was dead ; but the prophet added as a comfort to her that the child had been taken away from the evil to come, "because in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel."<sup>1</sup> This word casts a light on the mystery of lives cut off in the flower of their promise. It reminds us that there may have been moral dangers lying before such lives in their earthly environment which made their shortened day a merciful providence.

The same is true of those privations of precious faculties which often overtake promising lives. The blindness of Milton was anticipatory of the destiny a "Higher Command" had prepared for him than the writing of controversial treatises. The Gaol of Bedford was a captivity of the body that was meant to give a freer scope to the spirit of the great Dreamer. So in humbler life, losses and withholdings justify themselves to our later experience, and add an illustration out of our own life to the words of Christ: "What I do thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter."<sup>2</sup>

Such considerations give a clue to the mystery of pain which comes to a parent's heart when, as at a time of war like the present,<sup>3</sup> so many lives are cut off just when they seemed most full of promise. They do not explain the whole of it, of course. But they may a part. As we do not question the skill of an earthly surgeon when he takes away a precious organ because certain symptoms indicate to him that it may become in the future the seat of mortal disease, so we may believe that privations and bereavements, which at the time are bewildering with the mystery of their pain, may be found "afterwards" to work "the peaceable fruit" of righteousness and joy.

4. Finally, and most far-reaching of all in their influence on spiritual life is that class of trials in which we

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings xiv. 13.

<sup>2</sup> John xiii. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Written during the Great War.

see the Divine Surgery of pain working as a *Vicarious* agent.

In Physical Surgery we pointed out that there were a very large number of operations which were predominantly *ancillary* in their purpose. They were meant to aid Nature in performing functions which through injury or some other cause had been obstructed in their action. The great majority of these no doubt had for their end the preservation of the life of the organism itself. There are, however, others in which it is not so. Their end is ancillary, not to the life of the person operated on, but to the life of some one else. Their motive is not self-preservation but the preservation of the life of others.

Such, for example, is that known as the Transfusion of blood. In this curious operation, of which the earliest record is the case of Pope Innocent VIII. in 1492, the blood of a healthy man is transferred into an organism enfeebled by hæmorrhage in order to preserve it from death by exhaustion. It is not without danger, due to coagulation of the blood thus transfused, but is, I believe, still performed. It is a true example of vicarious surgery, in the sense that the life of one is thus placed at the disposal of another; but inasmuch as it involves little risk and no pain to him who gives it, it can hardly be said to be a case of vicarious sacrifice in the highest sense.

A more real example is found in the suffering which a mother endures in giving birth to her offspring. In the simplest form of parturition Nature performs her own work; but it is a real surgical operation none the less. As is well known, however, in a very large number of cases a direct interference is required by the surgeon's hand. Indeed, as Professor Drummond has pointed out in his *Ascent of Man*, there is pain and sacrifice involved in all parenthood from the lowest form of life to the highest, and the fact that, in spite of this, Nature takes care that the life of the species shall be preserved and transmitted shows that in her economy we see not only

the instinct for self-preservation, but the instinct for the preservation of the life of others.

In man, these physical sufferings which attend the procreation of children are, as we need hardly say, infinitely increased by the mental and spiritual burden which a father, and especially a mother, bears for the sake of their offspring.

Now, in this vicarious suffering we have an analogue of all the highest and noblest sorrows of the race. The mystery of pain probably finds its deepest solution here. Those sorrows which are deepest and highest are the vicarious sorrows—the burden which love entails upon itself when it gives itself freely and often absolutely for the well-being of others.

Of this type of suffering, we need hardly say, the Cross of Calvary is the great Divine example. Our Saviour Himself identified His sufferings with it when He said: "The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."<sup>1</sup>

In the closing words, the Saviour points to the compensation which lies at the heart of all vicarious sacrifice. This is caused by the joy "set before" the sufferer, in the prevision of the new life which shall emerge from his present pain. Such a thought enables him to rise triumphant over his present sufferings, and even to exult in them.

It is this anodyne for pain that the Saviour points out to the disciples, when using the very example of vicarious suffering we have already referred to. He says: "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for the joy that a man is born into the world. And ye therefore now have

<sup>1</sup> John xii. 23-25.



sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one taketh away from you.”<sup>1</sup>

This would seem to be the kernel of Hinton’s teaching in his *Mystery of Pain*. From the discomfort he experienced one day in working in his garden, and yet pleasure he found in it in spite of and even through that discomfort, he was led on to the thought that all our purest joys are connected with pain. “Pain is latent in our highest estate.” It lies hidden there because of the joy which overshadows it, but it is there nevertheless. “Take, for example, the offices rendered with joy by a mother to her babe. Let the love be wanting and what remains? Labour and vexation.” And what is true of man is true of God. “The pain that is latent in man’s highest bliss is latent too in God’s. That great Life and Death to which all eyes are ever turned reveals it so. If God would show us Himself, He must show Himself as a Sufferer, as taking what we call pain and loss. These are His portion: from eternity He chose them.”<sup>2</sup>

But though God has conformed Himself to the law of Sacrifice, Hinton does not believe that He suffers pain. For pain is due, he considers, to the weakness of the flesh. If we were baptized fully into the Spirit of God, we should feel no pain. Pain is only a symptom of the frailty of humanity, and according to the measure in which we become endued with the divine nature, pain passes out of sight.

We do not agree with this latter view. The Incarnation was meant, among other things, to teach us that God does suffer pain. “Since the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same. . . . For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.”<sup>3</sup>

These, then, are the ministries of pain. Trials are purifiers of the soul from mortal sin; they deepen and

<sup>1</sup> John xvi. 21, 22.

<sup>2</sup> *The Mystery of Pain*, by James Hinton, ch. iv.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. ii. 14, 18.

enrich the mind and character of those already purified; they anticipate and prevent the attack of evil; and last and highest of all, they are fruit-bearing experiences, making their possessors at once sympathizers with the sorrows of their fellows and saviours from their sins. Such a consideration is valuable in lightening the mystery of pain. It shows us not only how "sweet" but how varied are "the uses of adversity." It is also of practical value in teaching us how to deal with those who are crushed by its often heavy weight. In such treatment no doubt an infinite tact is needed. And this no theory can give. It is partly the gift of a sympathetic heart and partly the dower of a similar experience, by means of which we are able to comfort others "through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, a knowledge of the purpose and uses of Trial is of great value. It supplies the fitting word in time of need, and may thus prevent the sorrow which is meant as a minister of life and health to become the sorrow which "worketh death."<sup>2</sup>

This brings us to the question as to the value of Trial as a Minister of Life. That suffering is a successful operation in the vast multitude of cases need hardly be doubted; but is it not also true that in many it is a failure? Ruskin remarks somewhere, "I do not wonder at what men suffer; but at what they lose." It must be admitted that there are many cases in which sorrow works death and not life; it hardens the spirit, sours the temper and destroys faith. It is the parent of the cynical temper, and, if it does not always issue in this result, often confirms it in its search after material wealth and power, ending in the Miser's Avarice or the Tyrant's Curse.

What is the cause of this? It would take too long to enter into all the subtle reasons which turn "godly sorrow" into the "sorrow of the world"; but it may be said generally that sorrow can only exercise its beneficent

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. i. 4.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 10.

effects when it has something to work on. The nature thus wrought on must have already within it the potencies of faith and love, else it can do nothing with it. This is one reason why sorrow has so little effect on the mature and the old. It leaves them very much as it found them.

“Behold the man that loved and lost,  
And all he was is overworn.”

We here touch the deepest mystery of pain, the sorrows that come to the old; the tragedy of Lear, in which no beneficent purpose can be traced. Such experiences seem to be of a purely retributive quality, as the prophet regarded the calamities which were to befall his own city when he spoke of coming judgments as “a hot wind from the bare heights in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, *not to fan, nor to cleanse.*”<sup>1</sup> It is, however, always open to believe that even in these judgments a beneficent and gracious purpose is contained. These experiences may be regarded as the last effort of the Divine Surgeon to save the dying soul, and if the attempt is unsuccessful, the blame must lie not on the operator but on the operated.

As a general rule, however, the best results of the ministry of pain are to be looked for in young and growing souls, or in those in whom faith has already taken a deep and firm root. In these, as we have already remarked, its effect is so far-reaching that it may truly be affirmed that no soul has ever gained the highest without having at some time or another passed under its stern discipline.

<sup>1</sup> Jer. iv. 11.



## CHAPTER XII

### ETERNAL LIFE

WE have now come to the close of our inquiry. We have seen that the essence of Sanctifying faith is a receptive act, by means of which we "put on" Christ in the fulness of His Spiritual Health and Power. We have considered the diverse experiences by which such a mystic incorporation begins, and have dwelt on the various "means of grace" by which it is continued and perfected.

There remains one important question, What are the distinguishing elements of this Life to which this evolutionary process leads, and why is it called by Christ and His apostles "Eternal"? In a word, What are the evidences and qualities of Eternal life?

1. The first of these must obviously be the *sense of reality*; an assurance of God and a conviction of His "Love shed abroad in the heart."<sup>1</sup> If a man has become one with God, he must be assured, beyond the existence of any other reality in the world, that God is, and that He cares for him, making all things work together for his good. It is always a mark of physical health, that there is a sense of joy and vitality permeating the whole organism and making it ready for any activity; and so in the Spiritual body, when faith has done its work there should be this glow of conviction, this absolute assurance which the Apostle voices so often but never so eloquently as in his last days, when he declares, "I know whom I have

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 5.

believed, and am persuaded that He is able to guard that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”<sup>1</sup>

There has been some controversy as to whether Assurance properly belongs to Faith in its first beginnings. Wesley, as we know, held strongly that all saving faith should be accompanied by Assurance. If a man was saved, how should he not know it? On the other hand, as an Arminian, he believed that a man could fall from this state of grace, and that therefore his Assurance only covered his present, not his future condition.

The Calvinist again, believing that if a man was once in Christ he was His for ever, thought it dangerous to allow true Assurance to be an immediate accompaniment of saving faith. Assurance was only to be attained by a believer after a careful examination of his faith, and its evidences in Christian character. This is the view taken by Doddridge in his *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*,<sup>2</sup> and corresponds pretty much to Bunyan's, according to which the vision of the Cross and the Roll of Assurance were not given to Christian until some time after he had passed through “the wicket gate.”

The modern evangelist takes a somewhat different view from either of these schools of thought, which is not without its dangers. To the Wesleyan doctrine of immediate Assurance he gives a cordial assent, but usually joins to it the Calvinistic doctrine of Perseverance to the end. The result of this is that men under profound emotion are apt to make claims which lead to presumption and disastrous falls. I once heard one of these declare “that God Almighty would fall before he fell.” He subsequently lapsed into drunkenness and did much injury to the cause in which he was so enthusiastic, and at one time, we believe, a sincere believer.

It is probably such dangers that have led the Roman Church to incline to the Arminian or Wesleyan doctrine of Assurance, joining “trembling with its mirth,” and giving no certitude as to the fate of its members till

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. i. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Chs. xiii. and xiv.

Purgatory is passed. Thus Newman, a strong Calvinist in his early days, and one who confesses that its doctrine of Perseverance did him no spiritual harm, says: "Calvinists say that the converted and the unconverted can be discriminated by man, that the justified are conscious of their state of Justification, and that the regenerate cannot fall away. Catholics, on the other hand, shade and soften the awful antagonism between good and evil by holding that there are different degrees of justification, that there is a great difference in point of gravity between sin and sin, and that there is no certain knowledge given to anyone that he is simply in a state of grace, much less that he is to persevere to the end."<sup>1</sup>

This terrible insecurity of faith begets in the sincere Catholic an atmosphere of fear which, as we have elsewhere pointed out, is strangely different from the joyful confidence of the New Testament. "Beloved, *now* are we the children of God";<sup>2</sup> for "these things have I written unto you that ye may *know* that ye have eternal life."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, it is no less true that Paul exhorts him that "thinketh he standeth to take heed lest he fall,"<sup>4</sup> and declared that he sometimes feared lest "he who had preached to so many should himself be a castaway."<sup>5</sup>

The solution of the difficulty would seem to be this. There are two Assurances. There is Immediate Assurance and Full Assurance. Immediate Assurance is that which comes to a man (or may come to him) at Conversion, *i.e.* when he has accepted Christ in some definite experience. This is a present conviction of the reality of his faith, analogous to the glow of health which a man experiences when his disease has taken a favourable turn, and he feels he is getting better. Although, however, it is an assurance of present recovery, it is not a perfect assurance of health. The disease may return. He may have a relapse. Some inter-current affection may intervene and destroy his health, if not his life. Hence, he may need to join trem-

<sup>1</sup> Newman, *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, ch. i.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John v. 13.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. x. 12.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iii. 2.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 27.



bling with his mirth, to take care lest his convalescence should be marred by foolish temerity. Not till weeks, it may be months, can he assume the position of being a "well man" and return to his old life.

So there may be a perfectly sincere and objective assurance of Saving faith, but it may be unwise to build on it as to the future. It has not been tested by experience, it has not solidified into character, and, while there is no harm but rather good in a personal testimony as to one's present faith, it is better, instead of proudly boasting about a future which depends on nothing more solid than emotion, to make the "calling and election sure" by quiet waiting on God in the "Arabia" of prayer, meditation and self-discipline.

While, however, this is true, there must come a time when the "full assurance" of faith takes possession of the soul, when "the love of God is shed abroad in the heart," when "the Spirit of Adoption" is given, "whereby we cry, Abba, Father,"<sup>1</sup> when we have "in us the witness that we have eternal life."<sup>2</sup> God is no longer a subject of question. His love is a reality more unquestioned than any other. His presence is a daily inspiration, giving a peace "that passeth all understanding."<sup>3</sup>

Of this "full assurance of faith" the great mystics, the "aristocrats of the spiritual life," are the best examples; not because humbler men do not often feel the same, but because they have been more able to describe it. To quote Miss Underhill's eloquent account of what she calls "the unitive life": "From the point of view of the pure psychologist, the varied phenomena of the unitive life indicate the final and successful establishment of that higher form of consciousness which has been struggling for supremacy during the whole of the mystic way. The deepest, richest levels of the human personality have now attained to light and freedom. The self is remade, transformed, has at length unified itself, and with the cessation of stress, power has been liberated for new purposes. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John v. 10,

<sup>3</sup> Phil. iv. 7.

If he be of Eucken's school, the psychologist will say, further, that man in this unitive state, by the substitution of the Divine for the primitive self, has at length risen to true freedom, 'entered on the fruition of reality.' He has opened up new paths for the inflow of that triumphing power which is the very substance of the real, has wholly remade his consciousness and, in virtue of this total regeneration, 'is transplanted into that universal life which is yet not alien but our own.'<sup>1</sup>

"From contact set up with this universal life, this 'energetic' word of God, which nothing can contain—from these deep levels of being to which his growing, shifting personality is fully adapted at last—he draws that amazing strength, that immovable peace, that power of dealing with circumstances, which is one of the marked characteristics of the Unitive Life.

"That secret-self, 'of a permanent personality of a superior type,'<sup>2</sup> which gave to the surface self constant and ever more insistent intimations of its existence at every stage of the mystic's growth, his real eternal self, has now consciously realized its destiny and begins at last fully to be. In the travail of 'the dark night' it has conquered and invaded the last incalcitrant elements of character. It is no more limited to acts of profound perception, overpowering intuitions of the Absolute, no more dependent for its emergence on the psychic states of contemplation and ecstasy. The mystic has at last resolved the Stevensonian paradox, and is not truly two but one."<sup>3</sup>

We have quoted Miss Underhill at some length, because she describes, better than any one else we know, the unity and peace of that last final stage of spiritual convalescence and Christian growth to which all the varied influences we have been describing in the preceding chapters at length conduct the soul.

<sup>1</sup> Eucken, *Der Sinn und Wert des Lebens*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Delacroix, *Études sur le Mysticisme*, p. 114.

<sup>3</sup> Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, pp. 498, 499.

It is true, of course, that this sense of unity and reality varies very greatly. Miss Underhill describes what may be regarded as an ideal condition of it; the last perfected development of the Consciousness of a great Mystic. We must not expect for humble wayfarers in the path of life such an altitude of faith. Nevertheless, in a measure, all these points she has so well brought out in her eloquent description—the sense of unity within and the perfect peace which such a unity induces, the assurance of a Reality without, Whose name and Whose law is love and the sense of power which such a Reality gives—are elements which should ever be found in the Eternal Life and which come through the ever-deepening knowledge of God. “For this is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”

From this fundamental sense of the reality of God and the assurance of His love there follow certain results in the character and outlook of the Eternal Life. In the first place, there is in the words of William James “a sense of the friendly continuity of the ideal power with our own and a willing self-surrender to its control.”<sup>1</sup> We have already spoken of Consecration as a means of developing the divine life within the soul. Such self-dedication is, however, a conscious act of volition and is accompanied more or less by the pain of sacrifice. When spiritual health is fully reached, this pain passes out of sight. “The words, Thy will be done, become not a sigh but a song,”<sup>2</sup> and the soul’s attitude may be described as one of perfect resignation rather than that of deliberate consecration. The sacrifice has been already made. The human will has been fused with the divine, and in this fusion the soul attains a sense of serenity and freedom which breaks out into an irrestrainable burst of gladness.

<sup>1</sup> *Varieties of Religious Experiences*, p. 273.

<sup>2</sup> Frances Ridley Havergal.



To this the songs of the saints give abundant testimony. Thus Madame Guyon sings in the Prison House:

“Thy beautiful sweet will, my God,  
Holds fast in its sublime embrace  
My captive soul, a gladsome bird  
Prisoned in such a realm of grace.”

And lest such a testimony be discredited as the rapt outpourings of a somewhat hysterical mystic, we may add to it that of Dr. George Matheson, the Hymn-writer and Theologian of our own day:

“Make me a captive, Lord, and then I shall be free.  
Force me to render up my sword and I shall conqueror be.  
I sink in life's alarms, when by myself I stand;  
Imprison me within Thine arms and strong shall be my hand.  
My will is not my own, till Thou hast made it Thine;  
If it would reach the monarch's throne, it must its crown resign.  
It only stands unbent amid the clashing strife,  
When on Thy bosom it has leant and found in Thee its life.”

These and many other quotations which might be made are witness to that glad sense of union with the Divine will which is the first outward mark of Spiritual Health.

2. The second result of the Unitive Life is its passion for Purity, *its ardent desire for holiness and its growing assimilation with the Divine nature in this respect*. As St. Beuve says, this passion for holiness is independent of the differences of sect, religion or race. Whenever a man comes near God he desires to be like Him. “Penetrate beneath the diversity of circumstance and it becomes clear that in Christians of the most different epochs there is always one and the same modification by which they are affected—an inner state which before all things is one of love and humility, of infinite confidence in God, of severity towards oneself and of infinite tenderness for others.”<sup>1</sup>

We have seen that this holiness may be regarded from the medical point of view as that spiritual immunity which is due to the inoculation of the human spirit with the

<sup>1</sup> *Port Royal*, vol. i. pp. 95 and 106 quoted from Professor James.

Divine. "The Spirit of God," as some one has said, "cannot dwell in an unclean place." As the immanence of God in the human will leads inevitably to a spirit of glad consecration, so the same Immanence in the Conscience leads irresistibly to a divine impatience with moral evil. God and sin is the great antinomy. "Who shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" asks the prophet, to whom God is "a consuming fire," and answers the question by a definition of the saintly life in that ethical conception of it which was the grand characteristic of the prophets of Israel: "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gains of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from the holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from looking upon evil."<sup>1</sup>

It is at once the glory and criterion of the truth of the Christian conception of God that it produces this ethical result on the conscience of him whose soul is filled with it, and, as St. Beuve reminds us, it is a feature which is confined to no creed or communion. It is found in every church, and wherever it is found it is the infallible mark of the "eternal life," which has this seal—"Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness."<sup>2</sup>

3. But, as the same writer remarks, along with this severity to oneself there is combined *a growing charity and benevolence* to all mankind.

This is partly due to the joy of the "Unitive" life. Joy is naturally expansive. When a man has found a new secret of peace in his own heart he has an almost irresistible desire to impart it to others. Hence when the soul is filled with the "joy of salvation," it naturally goes out to radiate that to others. Its cry is, "Eureka!" It is eager that all should share in its great discovery.

But the chief secret of this spirit of universal benevolence is doubtless the same as that of the other features

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxxiii. 14, 15.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 19.

of Spiritual Maturity. It is due to the assimilation of the human with the Divine. Just as God immanent in the Will means a joyful consecration, and God immanent in the Conscience means a passion for holiness, so God immanent in the heart means love to all mankind. For "God is love," and he that dwelleth in God must therefore dwell in love.

This universal charity shows itself first of all *in a Philanthropia* which ever urges its possessor forth into the various forms of Christian Service. It is seen in the public spirit of the patriot and social reformer, the tireless activities of the Church worker at home and the missionary enthusiasm of a Francis Xavier or a David Livingstone. Just as the healthy body cannot be idle, but is always eager to be doing something, so a soul that is spiritually healthy cannot be idle. Besides the great Love which inspires it, its own natural origin impels it to go forth to the manifold service of man. Its motto must always be—"Necessity is laid upon me; for woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel."<sup>1</sup>

So sure a mark of spiritual soundness is this spirit of brotherhood that to Christ the most orthodox creed was not to be placed in the balance in comparison with it. The Good Samaritan, in spite of his faulty creed, was far nearer the Kingdom than the Orthodox Priest who had no love in his heart. "It is thus," says Luther, "we are to find and love God. The command to love God is brought down altogether into love for our neighbours."<sup>2</sup> "Luther," says Herrmann, "enunciates the paradox that God would rather forgo the service of Himself than the service of others, and insists that when we find some work we wish to do for God, that does not benefit others, we should count such work unholy." To the same effect an Italian Mystic writes: "They that love men and believe they are cold toward God are nearer the Kingdom than they who

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Werke*, vol. xliii. p. 152, quoted by Herrmann, *Christliche Verkehr*, p. III.



think they love God but do not love their fellow-men.”<sup>1</sup> And this the greatest mystic of the New Testament confirms when he says, “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar : for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen cannot love God whom he hath not seen.”<sup>2</sup>

4. Hence along with this spirit of active love in serving all men and in doing for them the highest of all services, the bringing of them to the knowledge of God, there is combined *a spirit of charity and benevolence in judging* those with whom on intellectual questions we may be in sharp conflict. This is what we call “*the mellowing of Christian Character*,” and is one of the surest marks of the approach of spiritual maturity. The type of mind which this expressive phrase covers is well described by the Apostle Paul when he says that “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness,”<sup>3</sup> and when he paints “Love” as “suffering long” and “kind,” as “bearing all things,” “believing all things,” “hoping all things,” “enduring all things.”<sup>4</sup>

At the beginning of the Christian life, along with much enthusiasm and courage for the truth, there is apt to be a spirit of contentiousness and acrimonious love of controversy, of hasty condemnation upon all who differ from us. The temper is hot and, as Baxter says, “inclined to go with the highest in controversies.” But as spiritual maturity advances, this acridity passes away, and there is developed a gentleness and forbearance with others which make their possessor slow to judge those who differ from him. The soul lives in an atmosphere of love, and sees all men in its mellow light. There is an infinite sorrow for the fate of the lost, but there is no anger towards those who seem likely to fall into it. Rather is all anger lost in an infinite Pity which cries, “How often would I . . . and ye would not !”

<sup>1</sup> *The Saint*, by Fogazarro, p. 389, Eng. trans.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iv. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. v. 22.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. xiii.

We have a fine example of the mellowing of Christian Character in Richard Baxter's 'Autobiography. At the close of the first part of that lengthy volume he has drawn out a series of striking contrasts between the "past and present" of his spiritual affections. The whole passage is worth perusal as an example of profound and skilful self-examination; but we are only able to cull a few excerpts here and there to illustrate the growth of a Character which was one of the noblest produced by the Puritan age.

Thus speaking of his mind he says: "In my youth I was quickly past my fundamentals and was running up into a multitude of controversies and greatly delighted with metaphysical writings; but the older I grow, the smaller stress I lay upon these controversies, as finding far more uncertainties in them and finding less usefulness even where there is the greatest certainty." And "this is another thing which I am changed in, that whereas in my younger days I never was tempted to doubt the truth of Christianity, but all my fears were about my own sincerity and interest in Christ, since then my sorest assaults have been on the other side, and such they were that had I been void of internal experience and the help of God I had certainly apostatized to infidelity. I am now therefore much more apprehensive than heretofore of the necessity of the witness of the indwelling Spirit, for I more sensibly perceive that the Spirit is the great witness of Christ to the world."

Speaking of his heart, he says: "In my younger years, my trouble for sin was about my *actual* failings, but now I am much more troubled for inward *defects*. My daily trouble is my ignorance of God and weakness of belief and want of greater love to Him. Had I all the riches of the world, how gladly should I give them for a fuller knowledge, belief in and knowledge of God! These wants are the greatest burden of my life, which oft maketh my life a burden."

But most relevant to the present subject are his

thoughts regarding his changed temper in judging others. Perhaps they are partly due to his own difficulties in reaching religious certitude, but they are largely the fruit of the Spirit of Love.

"I am not so narrow in my Principles of Church Communion as I was before. I more plainly see the difference between the Church as visible and the Church as mystical, and I am not for narrowing the Church more than Christ Himself alloweth us, nor for robbing Him of any of His flock. My soul is much more afflicted with the thought of this miserable world and more drawn out in desire of its conversion than heretofore. I was wont to look but little farther than England in my prayers; but now there is nothing that lieth so heavy on my heart as the thought of the miserable nations of the earth. Could we but go among the heathen and speak their language, I should be but little troubled for the silencing of 1800 ministers in England."<sup>1</sup>

"Yet," he adds, "am I not so much inclined to pass a peremptory sentence of damnation upon all that never heard of Christ, having more reason, than I knew of before, to think that God's dealing with such is much unknown to us.

"My censures on the Papists do much differ from what they were at first. At first I thought that a Papist could not go beyond a reprobate, but now I doubt not but that God hath many sanctified ones among them.

"I am deeper afflicted for the disagreements of Christians than I was when I was a younger man. Except the case of the infidel world nothing is so grievous to my thoughts as the case of the divided Churches. I do not lay so great stress upon the external forms of worship as many young professors do. I cannot be so narrow in my principles of Church Communion as many are. I cannot be of their opinion that think God will not accept him that prayeth by the Common Prayer-book, nor can I be of their mind that say the like of extemporary prayers.

<sup>1</sup> Alluding to the "Five Mile Act."



I am much more sensible of the breadth and length and depth of the radical, odious sin of selfishness, and of the excellency of self-denial, of a public mind and of loving our neighbour as ourselves.”<sup>1</sup>

We have quoted these judgments of Baxter upon himself at some length, partly because they are not easily accessible to the modern reader, and partly because of their intrinsic worth. While there may be some things in them as regards the incertitude of his faith on some points, which may cause surprise and even pain to those who expected more inward assurance in the last days of the author of the *Saints' Rest*, they are full of the noblest charity and tolerance in regard to others. And when we think that they come from one who lived at one of the most intolerant ages of history, and from one who had suffered the loss of all from such intolerance, when we remember that their author had stood before Jeffreys, we cannot but see in them a beautiful example of that mellowness of character which is one of the ripe fruits of spiritual maturity.

Such are the marks of a full-grown man in Christ—a strong assurance of faith, a calm peace consequent on that assurance, a triumphant resignation to the will of God, an earnest desire for the extension of His kingdom and a benignity of temper towards all mankind.

It remains to add that such a spirit is regarded by the New Testament as a “partaker of eternal life.” What does this phrase mean? Has it reference to the future life as well as the present? Does Eternal mean, as the word originally signifies, immortal, that which persists after death? If it does, what is the quality in it that gives it the secret of immortality? These are questions that demand a separate handling, and we shall reserve them for the subsequent and closing chapter.

<sup>1</sup> *Reliquiæ Baxterianæ*, Sylvester's edition of 1696, pp. 126-134—compressed.

## CHAPTER XIII

### WITHIN THE VEIL

**I**T is no part of our purpose here to enter into a full discussion of the various "proofs" which have been given for the Immortality of the soul. Science in recent days has become much more favourable to the reasonableness of such a hope than during the aggressive Agnosticism of the nineteenth century. At the same time, it must be admitted that these "proofs" do not reach a mathematical certainty. At the best they are cumulative in their influence and leave the question as "a solemn hope."<sup>1</sup>

Our purpose here is more limited. It is to consider the question as it is affected by the Remedial Conception of Christianity. We have been considering Sin as a disease of the Soul, whose result, if unchecked, is the destruction of the God-Consciousness which is its life; a destruction which, therefore, must end in spiritual death. We have also looked at Salvation as that redemptive process through which the divine life is renewed and developed in the soul, ending in Eternal life.

The question now remains—What of the future of this eternal life? We have analysed its various elements. Do these elements remain undestroyed in the fiery crucible of physical dissolution? Does the soul retain its identity "within the veil"? It was the despair of reaching certitude on these questions, that led Mr. F. W. Myers into the path of "Psychical Research." "I predict," he writes, "that in consequence of the new evidence" (from Spiritualism) "all reasonable men a century hence will believe the Resurrec-

<sup>1</sup> W. R. Greg, *Enigmas of Life*.

tion of Christ; whereas in default of the new evidence, no reasonable men a century hence would have believed it.”<sup>1</sup>

We do not think that in our own day such an attitude would be commonly taken by Science. The recent discoveries made by Psychology as to the mysterious law of Telepathy—apart from its spiritualistic applications—and the researches of Science into the problems of ultimate matter, have given a new life to the Spiritual conception of the universe. Men feel that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in materialistic philosophy.

While, however, there is a general trend towards Idealism in Philosophy, it cannot be said that we have reached any scientific proof of the future life—perhaps never will. An attempt has, indeed, been made on the side of Science to found a proof of the *probability* of the persistence of the Soul after death on the law of the Conservation of Energy. Science teaches that no form of energy is lost. It only “suffers a sea-change into something wonderful and strange.” Motion passes into heat, heat into steam, steam into electricity, electricity into light. If this be true of material force, why not of vital? Why should death mean the annihilation of the most persistent of all forces? Why may it not merely mean the passing of it into another form unseen by mortal eye but as real?

It may be objected that this is not a proof of *personal* immortality. When heat changes into steam, its energy passes into something utterly different owing to its physical basis. So when life leaves the body it may persist as a force, but in a form so different that the continuity of consciousness is lost. Mind, it is said, if not a function of the brain, is so closely influenced by it that an injury to the latter often changes it so entirely as to produce a “dual consciousness.” If this be the result of mere injury, what must be the effect of its utter destruction? An answer has, indeed, been attempted to

<sup>1</sup> *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, 2nd ed. p. 351.



this by Professor James<sup>1</sup> in his distinction of Functions into Productive, Permissive and Transmissive. If thought is a produced function of the brain, when the brain stopped producing, thought would, of course, cease. But if thought be only a transmitted function, then it need not perish though the medium through which it passes perishes. The "many-coloured glass" of time may be shattered, but "the white radiance" which passes through may last eternally. "Music issuing from an organ is a transmitted function. The organ does not produce the music, it merely transmits it, and in transmitting it gives to the music a certain individuality peculiar to the organ. If Paderewski were placed before an old crazy spinet with half its notes out of tune, some might say that Paderewski's power was gone. But place Paderewski before a perfectly equipped piano, and in an instant the old power would manifest itself. So it is not an unfair inference to believe that the brain is not the producer but the transmitter of thought; and although at times the soul does seem affected by the injuries received to its outward apparatus, we may believe that through death it will be introduced into new modes of life and energy."<sup>2</sup>

There is much that is true in the argument. At the same time, it is one only of probability. There is no certainty that mind is only a transmitted and not a produced function of the brain. Much may be said on both sides; and if we take the view that it is the latter, then all the law of Conservation of Energy would teach us is that mind force is not lost at death; that it passes back into the universal all from which it sprang. "The Spirit returns to God who gave it," as the wave sinks back into the ocean bed, there to be assumed into the bosom of its original mother,—in what is nothing more than a Nirvana of absorption in the divine.

<sup>1</sup> *Ingersoll Lecture on Human Immortality.*

<sup>2</sup> Article on "Personal Immortality." Dr. Sage Mackay in the *North American Review*, June 1907—compressed.

It is to reach a scientific proof of this preservation of Personal identity after death that the Society for Psychical Research was founded. Its object was to investigate all those phenomena hitherto made use of by Spiritualism, or as it should rather be called, Spiritism, in support of the faith in a personal immortality. Mr. Myers' two large volumes are a proof of the industry and impartiality of his work. Nor can it be denied that some useful results have been achieved. The Law of Telepathy has, for example, been brought to a high if not a perfect state of proof. And remarkable instances of messages given at the hour of death to friends far away have been authenticated beyond doubt. The distinguished names of Lombroso, Flammarion, Marconi, Sir William Crookes, Professor Hyslop, Professor James, Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir A. Conan Doyle cannot be set aside by calling them dupes of superstition. The Great War has naturally also increased the interest and the faith in these speculations—what we want to believe we easily believe—and Spiritism has therefore never had a larger following than to-day. But with the widest sympathy with the desires of these writers, we cannot think they have obtained results convincing to the impartial mind. The best they have been able to do is to produce a belief in the possibility of messages from the living at the hour of death being sent to loved ones far away. Such telepathic influences do seem to be proved by the remarkable and well-authentic "coincidences" which they record; but beyond this there is nothing to show that the conversations with the departed are other than the results of auto-suggestion produced in the sub-consciousness of the Medium by the telepathic influence of the thoughts and wishes of those for whom he or she is acting. For these "conversations" are, as a whole, most disappointing. They give us nothing new, nothing of value, and are often trivial in the extreme. They read rather like letters of prisoners of war strictly censored, and are confined to the assertion that their

authors are well and happy, and that their friends are not to worry.<sup>1</sup>

The result of these investigations is rather to convince us that the assurance of immortality is to be found by a different path—the way Christ pointed out when He proclaimed this doctrine as a corollary to the Fatherhood of God. “In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.”<sup>2</sup>

It is along the lines of this proof that we seek here to conduct our thoughts. Assuming the truth of God’s Fatherhood in Christ and the reality of the remedial process which we have been examining in the previous chapters, we come to the question, What reason have we to believe that the result of it will be the development of a Personality capable of resisting the disintegrating power of time and the destructive forces of physical death?

We have seen no reason to believe in the indestructableness of the soul. On the contrary, Sin has presented itself as a spiritual disease, whose end, if uncured, is the destruction of that Divine Presence within it which is the secret of its life. But, on the other hand, we have disclosed in Christian Redemption a process of the renewal of that God-Consciousness within it which ends in the development of a Perfect man, made after Him who has “the power of an endless life.”<sup>3</sup> And the question therefore remains, What reason have we to believe that there is in this Perfect man the power to meet and conquer death? For we must not minimize the greatness of death. It is revealed both in experience and revelation as a tremendous fact. No doubt there are moods in the spiritual life—high moments of vision—when death seems very little. Such moments as Augustine felt when, in conversation with Monica in “the window that overlooked a garden in Ostia,” the veil seemed removed altogether and their spirits were already in the possession of eternal life. But

<sup>1</sup> Such is our impression produced by Sir Oliver Lodge’s *Raymond*.

<sup>2</sup> John xiv. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. vii. 16.



while these moods are often reflected in the New Testament, and are indeed its prevalent note, this is not because it makes little of death. It is rather because it enhances the glory of Christianity. It has triumphed over the last and greatest of all our enemies. To Athanasius and the Greek Theologians the supreme triumph of Christ was indeed this, that He had drawn the sting out of the jaws of death. No doubt this was to make too little of sin; but it undoubtedly reflects one side of the New Testament's attitude to the Cross and Resurrection. They were Christ's Supreme triumph over death as well as sin.

Nor is this thought of the solemn reality of death lessened by Modern Science. On the contrary, it everywhere emphasizes the importance of the physical basis of life. While it has never gone the length of holding that life is the production of matter, it lays its emphasis on the fact that life cannot exist without such a basis, and points out, as we have already noticed, that an injury to the brain will seriously affect not merely the intellectual, but the moral life of its possessor. When such a basis is therefore not merely injured but destroyed, must not the result on the mental as well as the physical life be one of profound and awful significance?

The only answer to the difficulties suggested by such questions is the insistence of the Spiritual or Eternal Life as *something that is not dependent for its existence on a material environment*. We must find in the Eternal life an element which is outside matter altogether, which is created outside of it, breaths an air other than that of earth, and can therefore live when the terrestrial is abolished.

And this is the conception of the eternal life which we have laboured to establish in our conception of "Salvation" as a new life bestowed in Christ. It is something born from above; it is nurtured by heavenly, not earthly influences; it breathes in an environment which is by nature eternal, and therefore when death attacks the earthly form

in which it is manifested, it has no power over it. It escapes, and so far from being injured by it, passes into a purer atmosphere, in which it is no longer clogged and hindered by its "body of humiliation."

We have a scientific expression of this conception of eternal life in Professor Drummond's chapter on this theme in *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*. He begins by taking Herbert Spencer's definition of Eternal Life "as the perfect correspondence of an organism to a perfect environment" for the basis of his argument. "Perfect Correspondence," says Spencer, "would be Perfect Life. Were there no changes in the environment but such as the organism had adapted changes to meet, and were it never to fail in the efficiency with which it met them, there would be eternal existence and eternal knowledge." Hence, what a living creature would require in order to survive the death of its bodily envelope, would be the development within it of a correspondence which organic death would be powerless to arrest. "We must, in short," says Drummond, "pass beyond that finite region where the correspondences are dependent on evanescent material media and enter a further region where the environment corresponded with, is itself eternal."<sup>1</sup>

Now such a correspondence and environment are provided for in Christ's definition of "eternal life." Life eternal is to know God. To know God is to correspond with God. To correspond with God is to correspond with a perfect environment. And the soul which attains to this must in the nature of things live for ever. "Here is eternal existence and eternal knowledge."<sup>2</sup>

The soul cannot of itself evolve such a correspondence. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh."<sup>3</sup> But the Holy Spirit can thus make its possessors "heirs of eternal life." Such a possession cannot, of course, be scientifically proved. It can only be believed in by those who have

<sup>1</sup> *Natural Law in the Spiritual Word*, 8th ed., p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 215.

<sup>3</sup> John iii. 6.

the experience of it; though it has its outward evidences in its fruits. But Drummond points out that it is in line with the general trend of evolution, that the ascent of man should end in this Spiritual Correspondence. "Will the evolutionist, who admits the regeneration of a frog under the modifying influence of a continued correspondence with a new environment, question the possibility of a soul acquiring such a faculty as prayer; the marvellous breathing function of the new creature when in correspondence with the atmosphere of a besetting God?"<sup>1</sup> Material Evolution culminates in knowledge. If the ascent is to go farther it must develop along the line of knowledge, and culminate in the knowledge of Him who made man for Himself—the knowledge of God.

It may be said, Is not such an argument for Immortality applicable only to Christians, and even to mature Christians—to those who are already in the full possession of eternal life? If we took Drummond's view of Regeneration, that it is like Biogenesis, the implanting of life in a dead body, this might be true; but, as we have already pointed out, we do not take this view, which is as unscientific as it is untrue to experience. *Life is never born out of death.* Life comes from life, and the new life which the Holy Spirit fosters and develops in the soul is not a new creation in what before was dead. The germ of eternal life was there all the time, and in none more truly than the little child. "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."<sup>2</sup>

*Anima naturaliter Christiana.* In every living soul there is the germ of eternal life. That germ may, indeed, be destroyed by sin. But so long as it is there, the spirit of man has in it "the promise and the potency of Immortality."

But while Immortality is thus within the reach of all who die with the "divine correspondence" unbroken, it is true that such a conception offers the possibility of endless degrees of development in the immortal life. Some will enter on that heritage much more richly en-

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xix. 14.



dowed than others, and while we have no knowledge and no right, therefore, to dogmatize on the potencies and possibilities of such a life, it does seem to be in accordance with the teaching of Scripture and the suggestions of our own experience that this difference of glory will be perpetuated in the life to come. If time is but the apprenticeship for eternity, a man's apprenticeship is nevertheless a most important part of his life. The stunted sappling on earth is not likely to grow into a perfect tree in heaven.

It may be further pointed out that we have no ground for believing that the future life will be one conducted on conditions absolutely different from the present. It is the fashion in some quarters to speak of eternal life as something which has no relation to time whatever. Thus Bishop Westcott says: "It is necessary to premise that in spiritual things we must guard against all conclusions which rest on the notions of succession or duration. Eternal life is that which Paul speaks of as 'ἡ ὄντως ζωή,' 'the life which is life indeed,' or 'ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ,' 'the life of God.' It is not an endless duration of being in time, but being of which time is not a measure. We have, indeed, no powers to grasp the idea except through the images of sense."<sup>1</sup>

With all deference to so great an authority, we must say that in the New Testament the word "eternal" always connotes the sense of duration. It means "age-long," and always conveys the thought of the power to outlast death. Nor, in spite of all that Kant has said about Time and Space being forms only of phenomenal reality, can we conceive of a personal existence from which the thought of duration is excluded.<sup>2</sup> What may be true about

<sup>1</sup> *The Epistles of St. John*, p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> We may remark that recent Philosophy emphasizes this view. Thus even an Absolute Idealist like Professor Pringle Pattison admits that "the relations of time must be represented in the infinite experience" (*The Idea of God*, p. 366). And, as is well known, M. Bergson sees in Time "the very stuff of reality," "the very essence of the life of every living thing," "the whole meaning of its reality" (*Creative Evolution*, Eng. tr., p. 358 ff.).

noumenal reality we know not, but so far as the life of the creature is concerned we can conceive of no personal identity apart from time. For memory is the basis of identity. Where there is no sense of duration there can be no unity of personality.

Eternal life is therefore not being outside of time, and as such there must be in it the possibility of growth. This gives a clue to the mystery which has sometimes gathered round the question of childhood in the immortal life. Will there be no children in heaven? If so, it would seem to lack an element that earth possesses; and yet we cannot conceive the possibility nor welcome the thought of a child being for ever arrested by death in his development. The answer to such questions would seem to be best suggested by the saying of Swedenborg, "The oldest angels are the youngest." There will be a growth towards maturity in the immortal life, and yet there will be a growth towards youthfulness too. There will always be children there, at least so long as this Cosmos lasts; and yet there will be no age, no burden of mortality. The oldest in years will be the youngest in heart.

What is true of time is also, we believe, true of space; although in regard to this category of thought we may not be able to reach the same certitude. Yet when we consider the vastness of the sidereal universe and the infinite possibilities that are there, we must confess we see no reason why "the many mansions" of Christ's message should not be more than a parable.

Here, however, it is well to restrain our imagination, and to remember that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him."<sup>1</sup>

All we can premise is that the life which is within the veil will be one in which the spiritual powers will be brought to their fulness of perfection by their entrance on an environment no longer infected with the germs of

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 9 (A.V.).

evil, and by the enduement of a body no longer burdened by the weight of mortality. Mortality will then "be swallowed up of life"<sup>1</sup> in an existence—

"where God  
Immediate rules, and Nature, awed, suspends her sway."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Dante, *Paradiso*, Cary's tr., Canto xxx.





## NOTE A

### LIST OF SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

*Where sin is regarded as a Disease and Salvation as Life.*<sup>1</sup>

#### I. SIN A DISEASE ENDING IN DEATH.

GEN. ii. 17. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

GEN. iii. 24. "He placed at the east of the garden . . . the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

DEUT. xxx. 15. "I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil."

2 CHRON. xxxvi. 16. "They mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, . . . till there was no remedy."

PS. vi. 2. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord ; for I am withered away : heal me ; for my bones are vexed."

PS. xxxii. 3. "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long."

PS. li. 7 and 8. "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow : . . . that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice."

PS. cii. 3 and 10. "My bones are burned like a firebrand, because of Thine . . . indignation."

PS. ciii. 1 and 3. "Bless the Lord, O my soul : . . . who forgiveth all thine iniquities ; who healeth all thy diseases."

PROV. viii. 36. "He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul : all that hate me love death."

ISA. i. 5 and 6. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it ; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores."

ISA. liii. 5. "With His stripes we are healed."

JER. iii. 22. "I will heal your backslidings."

JER. viii. 11 and 22. "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people lightly, saying, Peace, peace ; when there is no

<sup>1</sup> This list is not exhaustive. Many more references might be given. It only includes some of the salient passages.

peace. . . . Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of My people recovered?"

JER. xvii. 9 and 14. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is desperately sick: who can know it? . . . Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed."

JER. xxx. 13 and 17. "Thou hast no healing medicines. . . . I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord."

JER. xlvi. 11. "Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin daughter of Egypt: in vain dost thou use many medicines; there is no healing for thee."

JER. li. 8 and 9. "Babylon is suddenly fallen . . . take balm for her pain, if so she may be healed. We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed."

EZEK. xxxvi. 26. "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

EZEK. xlvii. 12. "The fruit of the tree shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine."

HOS. v. 13, and vi. 1 and 2. "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to Assyria, and sent to king Jareb: but he is not able to heal you, neither shall he cure you of your wound. . . . Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us."

HOS. xiv. 4. "I will heal their backsliding."

MAL. iv. 2. "Unto you that fear My name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings."

MATT. i. 21. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He it is that shall save" (literally heal) "His people from their sins."

MATT. viii. 17. "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."

MATT. ix. 12 and 13, and MARK ii. 17. "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. . . . I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

MARK ix. 43. "If thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than having thy two hands to go into hell."

LUKE iv. 18. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He hath sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised."

LUKE iv. 23. "He said unto them, Doubtless ye will say unto me . . . Physician, heal Thyself."

LUKE iv. 33-35. "In the synagogue there was a man which had



a spirit of an unclean devil; and he cried out with a loud voice, Ah! what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? . . . And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him."

LUKE v. 24. "That ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (He said unto him that was palsied), . . . Arise."

LUKE xv. 17. "When he came to himself, he said, . . . I will arise and go to my father." (Sin a madness.)

JOHN iii. 16. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

ACTS viii. 23. "Thou art in the gall of bitterness."

ROM. vii. 5. "When we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were through the law, wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death."

ROM. vii. 19 and 24, 25. "The good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practise. . . . O wretched man! . . . Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" (Sin a paralysis.)

EPH. iv. 18. "Alienated from the life of God . . . because of the hardening of their heart."

2 TIM. ii. 17. "Their word will eat as doth a gangrene."

2 PET. i. 9. "He that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near."

REV. xxii. 2. "The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

## II. SALVATION AS LIFE

EX. xv. 26. "I am the Lord that healeth thee."

DEUT. viii. 3. "Man shall not live by bread only, but by every thing that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." Quoted by Christ, MATT. iv. 4.

PS. xvi. 11. "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; in Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

PS. lxxvii. 1 and 2. "God be merciful unto us, . . . that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations."

ISA. lv. 3. "Hear, and your soul shall live."

MAL. ii. 5. "My covenant was with him of life."

MATT. xviii. 8 (and many other passages). "Enter into life."

LUKE xv. 24. "This my son was dead, and is alive again."

JOHN iii. 14, 15. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilder-

ness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up : that whosoever believeth may in Him have eternal life." Eternal life as a *present possession* is a peculiarly Johannine thought, and is referred to in numerous passages—especially John v. 24, vi. 40, 48, 50, 51, 54, 57, 58, x. 10, xvii. 3 ; 1 John iii. 14.

ROM. vi. 23. "The wages of sin is death ; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Also viii. 3 and 1 Cor. xv. 22.

GAL. ii. 20. "I live ; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me."

1 TIM. vi. 12. "Lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called." Also ver. 19. "The life which is life indeed."

1 JOHN v. 11 and 12. "The witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life ; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life."

## NOTE B

### RECENT RESEARCHES IN THE SUBCONSCIOUS, AND THEIR RELIGIOUS INTEREST

THE recognition of a subconscious factor in human experience is no new thing in psychology. Sir W. Hamilton called definite attention to it in his doctrine of Mental Latencies. The explanation of some of the features of memory demanded some such mental life below the margin of consciousness, and the morbid phenomena of certain brain diseases showed that memories could be so detached from the ordinary consciousness as to form a dual personality. The theory was developed by Dr. Carpenter under the title of "unconscious cerebration," and interesting facts were brought to light by his investigations. It was Frederick Myers, however, who first brought the doctrine into prominence, in 1878. His phrase, "subliminal consciousness," used in a paper read to the Society for Psychical Research, caught the ear. It was taken up specially by the American School of Psychology and became an important principle with them.

"I cannot but think," says Professor James, "that the most important step forward that has occurred in psychology since I have been a student of the science is the discovery that, in certain subjects at least, there is not only a consciousness of the ordinary field with its usual centre and margin, but an addition thereto, in the shape of a set of memories, thoughts and feelings which are extra-marginal and outside of the primary consciousness altogether, but yet must be classed as conscious facts of some sort, able to reveal their presence by unmistakable signs."<sup>1</sup>

It was with a religious interest that Mr. Myers advanced his hypothesis. After contrasting the doctrine of the "common-sense" philosophers, that personality was an indivisible monad, and that "Identity when applied to persons admits of no degrees,"<sup>2</sup> with the materialistic view, that the unity of the ego is formed by "the co-ordination of a certain number of states having for their sole basis the vague feeling of one body,"<sup>3</sup> he goes on to ask, Is there not a

<sup>1</sup> *Varieties of Rel. Exp.*, p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> Reid, *Intellectual Powers*.

<sup>3</sup> Ribot, *Maladies de la Personnalité*.



deeper truth which can conserve our sense of identity amid the utmost disintegrations of memory? He finds it in the conception of a Subliminal Self which usually manifests itself to our consciousness under bodily conditions ; but of which we have abundant evidence that it is by no means so confined.

I may quote his own words. After acknowledging the force of the argument from the morbid phenomena of brain diseases, which seem to bear out the materialistic explanation of our sense of personality, he goes on to say : "On the other hand, and in favour of the partisans of the unity of the ego, the effect of the new evidence is to raise their claim to a far higher ground and to substantiate it for the first time with the strongest presumptive proof for it, viz., that the ego can survive not only the minor disintegrations of personality which affect it during earth-life, but the crowning disintegration of death. The conscious self of each of us, as we call it—the supraliminal, as I should prefer to say—does not comprise the whole of the consciousness within us. There exists a more comprehensive one, which for the most part remains only potential in the life of earth, but from which the consciousness and the faculties of our earth-life are mere selections, and which reasserts itself in its plenitude after the liberating change of death."<sup>1</sup>

In other words, Mr. Myers' chief interest is that of proving the power of personality to survive death. He holds that proofs drawn from evidences of discarnate personalities really existing are the only ones that will conserve in a modern mind the belief in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of it, which of course he only accepts in a non-material sense.

As we have already indicated, it cannot be said that in this either he or his coadjutors have reached great results. A certain number of phantasms of the dead making their appearance to the living seem undoubtedly well authenticated ; but the net result that has come from such researches is on the whole lamentably small, and seems to invite, if it does not justify, the contemptuous criticism of Mr. Clodd in his *Reminiscences* : "If these things are all the dead can do, they seem to be in a mighty poor way."

But sometimes the by-product of a search is more valuable than the thing sought ; and in seeking evidences of the discarnate consciousness Mr. Myers directed inquiries into an interesting and fruitful path—the influence of the subconscious on the conscious life in the soul's great crises.

No doubt there is a tendency in many of its advocates to claim more for it than experience warrants. Mr. Myers is one of the greatest sinners in this respect when he claims for it that it "involves the possession of a stream of thought wholly independent of what we

<sup>1</sup> *Human Personality and its Survival after Death*, by F. W. Myers.

receive through our work-a-day conscious life.”<sup>1</sup> Dr. Stevens, to whom I owe this criticism, holds that subconsciousness is purely transmissive, not creative. We cannot, however, get his length. There are phenomena which show that the subconsciousness is as creative as any other part of man’s mysterious being. Note such facts as problems of the most complex nature, poems of the most exquisite beauty, spiritual illuminations of the most wonderful character, being the gift of sleep, and we cannot but feel that we have no right to place any limits to the power of this mysterious faculty.

So far as religion is concerned, the subconscious action has been traced in conversion, in the prayer life of the soul, and in recent attempts to reach an explanation of the dual consciousness of the Man, Christ Jesus. The first two have already been dealt with in the text, but we may add a few words on the third.

This essay was made by Professor Sanday in his recent work entitled *Christologies, Ancient and Modern*. It is of a most reverent nature, we need hardly say, and attempts to throw light on the deepest question of Christian theology, the doctrine of the two natures in the one personality of the Man, Christ Jesus.

Dr. Sanday’s view of the incarnation may be expressed in a sentence. He would make the division of the “two natures” of Christ one that is *horizontal* rather than *vertical*. He would see in the subconsciousness the seat of Christ’s divine nature, while the conscious is the human.

To quote his words, “If we look into ourselves this is what we see. There is an impulse to right action and we act, an impulse to prayer and we pray. These promptings come from a hidden source within. ‘The Spirit helpeth our infirmities with groanings which cannot be uttered.’ We know enough of what goes on within to trace it to its source; but we cannot go beyond this. It is literal truth to say, the inner eye of the Spirit is hid with Christ in God; but the medium through which that life is manifested is the common life of man.

“Now the analogy can be transferred to Christ. If what we have of divine must pass through a human medium, the same law would hold for Him. We should expect it would be so, and we find it was so. Difficulties are involved in the attempt to draw a vertical line between the human and divine; to say certain actions fall on one side and certain on the other. But these disappear if we draw a horizontal line between the upper human medium and these lower depths which are the natural home of the spirit. The advantage of this is that it leaves us free to think of Christ’s life as grandly human, although at the same time it leaves an opening by which the Deity of the Incarnate preserves its continuity with the Divine.

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology of the Christian Soul*, Stevens, p. 86.



On the one hand we think of the consciousness of the Lord as entirely human ; on the other we refuse to rule out the evidence the Gospels afford, that the human life was in its deepest roots continuous with the Divine . . . Human consciousness is porous. 'We feel that we are greater than we know.' There are promptings from beneath which stretch into infinity, like the movements of a needle on a dial urged by something from beneath. . . .

"So with Christ. He did not wear His Divinity on His sleeve. He knew the condition He was assuming permitted only degrees of self-manifestation. But as in man the whole self is indefinitely larger than the conscious, so in our Lord the manifested life was only an index to the total life."<sup>1</sup>

It might have been thought that a reverent attempt to explain what is confessedly a great mystery would have been received with sympathy, if not with favour. But this was not so. Dr. Sanday's contribution to Christology was with one or two exceptions received with a chorus of disapproval—one critic (Mr. J. M. Thompson) dismissing it as a "theological adventure of which the outcome is most uncertain."

For my own part I must say it has given me a good deal of light on the problem of the Incarnation. The only two objections which seem formidable are, *first* of all, *that the subconscious in man has no moral* quality, that it is a mixed quantity, devilish as well as divine. That may be true of ordinary men, though even there we have had reason to believe that in its deepest stratum it is divine. But let us consider what the subconsciousness of Christ was, if, as we believe, He had a pre-existent life with the Father. His soul must then be supposed to have come into our world not merely "trailing clouds of glory"; but filled beyond measure with the Spirit.

*The second* objection may seem still more formidable. The subconscious, it is said, is *part of our common humanity as much as the conscious*. Christ must have shared it with us *no more and no less*. If divine in Him, it is also divine in us. My answer to this criticism would be that Dr. Sanday does not say that the whole of the subconsciousness of Christ was divine; there was doubtless a part of it inherited from His earthly generation which was human, and the presence of which constituted part of His trial. All Dr. Sanday says is that *the Deity of Christ had its seat in the subconscious*, and this seems to me to be a true saying. It was there, from His birth; but it only gradually came to light, at impulses;—in His twelfth year, at His Baptism, and so on with greater manifestation till He entered into His glory.

This is how the matter shapes itself to my mind, and though I do not pretend to say it takes away all the mystery, it certainly explains

*Christologies, Ancient and Modern*, p. 179 (Abridged).



it better than any kenotic theory I have hitherto seen. While we must not identify the whole of the subconsciousness of Christ with the divine nature of Christ, we can say that *here was the locus of His Divinity*. Here resided the power which increasingly shaped His mind and will ; until at the Cross the veil was rent asunder and He became one, both in His consciousness and subconsciousness, with the Father.

## NOTE C

### MENTAL HEALING

THE following is the report of the Commission of Medical and Clerical Representatives which took place at St. Paul's Cathedral in October 1910 to discuss the asserted results and rapid development of 'Spiritual' and 'Faith-healing' movements. The Commission consisted of the Dean of Westminster (chairman), the Rev. W. G. Cameron, Canon Childe, the Dean of Durham, the Dean of St. Paul's, Professor Newsom, Prebendary Northcote, the Bishop of Stepney, Rev. Dr. Robinson, Rev. Dr. Sinclair, Sir Dyce Duckworth (vice-chairman), Dr. Stanley Bousfield, Dr. Charles Buttar, Mr. Macadam Eccles, Dr. Haviland Hill, Dr. Hyslop, Dr. Gordon Mackenzie, Dr. Ormerod, Sir Douglas Powell, Dr. Howard Tooth, Sir Clifford Allbutt.

"They would say at the outset that they can conceive of no limitation to the exercise of the power of God in stirring the inborn spirit of man to higher and fuller life ; and in inspiring courage and hope, to resist morbid conditions of the body. They fully recognise that the operation of the Divine Power can be limited only by the Divine Will and desire to express their belief in the efficacy of prayer.

"They reverently believe, however, that the Divine Power is exercised in conformity with and through the operation of natural laws. With the advancing knowledge of these laws increasing benefits are being secured for mankind through human instrumentality. Especially is this the case in regard to the healing of disorders of body and mind. They consider that spiritual ministration should be equally recognised with medical ministration as carrying God's blessing to the sick and as His duly appointed means for the furtherance of their larger interests. Too often it has been forgotten that health, bodily and mental, is capable of being influenced for good by spiritual means.

"The Committee are of opinion that the physical results of what is called 'Faith' or 'Spiritual healing' do not prove on investigation to be different from those of mental healing or healing by 'sugges-

tion.' The term Suggestion is used in this report in a wide sense, as meaning the application of any mental process to the purposes of treatment. They recognise that Suggestion is more effectively used by some persons than others, and this fact seems to explain the 'gifts' of a special character claimed by certain healers. It is undoubtedly due to the striking benefits which sometimes result from suggestion that belief in its claims has been fostered."

The Report goes on to warn sick-patients against so-called 'healers,' "as by doing so they may postpone medical treatment till too late. They, however, warmly welcome an increased co-operation between ministers and doctors in the treatment of the sick."

In the appendix there is an account of an interview with Dr. McComb of the Emmanuel Church Movement, in which he deprecates the use of the term "suggestion" as a definition of "Divine Healing," preferring the word Psychotherapy. He admits, however, that his method might be described, as "suggestion operating as a spiritual influence on the man who is thus lifted above himself by psychic energies he could not himself arouse. The Divine Spirit is the ultimate cause of the process, but the approximate cause might be called suggestion." He and Dr. Worcester had no homes for treatment, using only their private studies, and received no fees.

Beyond the statement that spiritual healing is only a form of suggestion, there is no condemnation of the Emmanuel Movement; but, as has been remarked, the British Medical Association has passed an adverse judgment upon it.

There are also some other curious interviews with the Earl of Sandwich, and several clergymen of the Church of England, in which the gift of healing by prayer or the "laying on of hands" is claimed. These are mostly High Churchmen. One of them, the Rev. J. C. Fitzgerald of the "Community of the Resurrection," holds Spiritual Healing to be distinct from Mental Healing. "In the latter the personality of the healer is the great thing. In the former the healer is simply a passive agent of our Lord." He preferred working with medical men; but there were cases which were given up by the doctor. Laying on of hands was not necessary. Faith was the great remedy. "I wait for the Lord to pour His healing power through me."





# I N D E X

- Alcoholism, 60, 61.  
 Ambition, 70-2.  
 Anæmia, spiritual, 46, 47.  
 Anger, 77.  
     ,, forms of, 78-80.  
 Arnold, M., 175.  
 Assurance, 271 f.  
 Avarice, 73.  
  
 Baxter, Richard, 280-2.  
 Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*, 162.  
 Bushnell, Horace, 132, 137, 180.  
  
 Calvin on Childhood, 130.  
 Campbell, R. J., on Free-will, 13.  
 Chesterton quoted, 118.  
 Christian Science, 213-7, 260.  
 Coe, Dr., 130, 132, 134, 136, 229.  
 Confessional, advantages of, under conditions, 69.  
 Consecration, or complete surrender, 199, 200, 275.  
 Conversion, 143, 147, 152.  
     ,, in relation to children, 137-40.  
 Cutten, Dr., 137, 143, 150.  
  
 Dale, Dr., 125, 141.  
 Dante, 50.  
 Death, spiritual, 106-9.  
     ,, eternal, 110-13.  
 Denney, Dr., 107, 183, 185.  
 Depravity, 131-5.  
 Doubt, 86-90.  
 Drug habit, 63.  
 Drummond, Henry, 184, 289.  
  
 Environment, 38, 45, 46.  
 Envy and jealousy, 80-3.  
  
 Faith, 121-8, 178, 179, 215.  
 Forgiveness, 184-90.  
 Freedom, 12.  
  
 Gardiner, Col., 148.  
  
 Garfield, President, 25.  
 Guyon, Madame, 103, 276.  
  
 Harnack, 6, 124, 238.  
 Hawthorne, 260.  
 Heredity, 46.  
 Hermann, 119, 120, 278.  
 Hinton, James, on Pain, 267.  
 Holiness, 197-205, 276, 277.  
 Hooker, 29.  
 Hypocrisy, 94-7.  
  
 Immanuel Church movement, 95, 215, 305.  
 Incarnation, 267, 301-3.  
 Inhumanity, 78.  
  
 James, Wm., 2, 143, 150, 158, 275, 285, 299.  
  
 Keswick Convention views, 199 f.  
  
 Leighton, Gerald, 196.  
 Life Eternal, 120, 270 f.  
 Luther, 177, 187, 278.  
  
 Macaulay quoted, 78.  
 Marshall, 201, 234.  
 Martensen, 56, 99, 101, 239.  
 Matheson, George, 276.  
 Mediator, Christ as, 116-20.  
 Melancholy, religious, 19.  
 Mentzschikoff, 46, 160.  
 Moody, D. L., 41.  
 Morris, Lewis, quoted, 34.  
 Moule, H., 200.  
 Myers, F. H. W., 284 f., 299, 300.  
  
 Neurasthenia, 64.  
 Newman, Francis, 140.  
 Newman, J. H., 143, 210, 272.  
  
 Pain, mystery and ministry of, 256, 259 f.  
 Pain, spiritual, 24.

- Paralysis, moral, 30.  
 Profanity of language, 98.  
 „ of thought, 99.  
 Revivals, 141, 168, 169, 173.  
 Ritschl quoted, 17, 180.  
 Rousseau on Childhood, 132.  
  
 Sage, Donald, 148.  
 St. Beuve, 276.  
 Salmond, Dr., on Immortality,  
     112.  
 Schleiermacher, 16, 115.  
 Self-sacrifice, beauty of, 180.  
 Shakespeare, 82.  
 Sin, as soul disease, 3-6.  
   „ its end, 105 f.  
   „ its remedy, 115 f., 184 f.  
   „ its solidarity, 101.  
   „ variety of, 48.  
 Soul-sickness, sources of, 7, 35-45.  
 Spiritualism, 286 f., 300.  
 Starbuck, 143, 167, 198, 204.  
 Steven, 144, 301.  
 Subconsciousness in Conversion, 150 f.
- Subconsciousness in Prayer, 210.  
   „ in Theology, 301-3.  
 Superstition, 91-3.  
  
 Telepathy, 284-6.  
 Temperament in religion, 163.  
 Temptation, immunity to, 197.  
 Tennant, A. F., on Sin, 133.  
 Tolstoi, 21, 22.  
 Tripartite nature of man, 51-4.  
  
 Underhill, Miss E., quoted, 92, 273,  
     274.  
 Untruthfulness, 76.  
  
 Vanity and Pride, 72.  
  
 War and Faith, 108, 262-4.  
 Weaver, Richard, on Conversion, 79.  
 Wells, J. H., 118, 119.  
 Wesley on Assurance, 271.  
 Wordsworth quoted, 132, 154, 253.  
  
 Zinzendorf, 239.













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